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KINGSWOOD SERMONS

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KINGSWOOD SERMONS

By

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In Memory of Her
To whose inspiration is due
Aught of worth herein.

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SCHOOL SONG

In Gloriam Dei Optimi Maximi!
Mother of men who have lived for mankind,
Choosing the better part, grant us their grace of heart,
Health for the body and light for the mind.
Kingswood, we pray that we
Still may be true to thee:
Ours be the right way, helpful and willing way.

CHORUS.

Right away! Straight away! That shall be our way!
No room for loafer, coward, or fool.
Word and will true and clean, work and play strong and keen,
None for himself but all for the School!
School! School! All for the School!

In usum Ecclesiae et Reipublicae!
Sharing their life we can not live alone:
England our pride, 'neath her flag we abide,
And the church of our fathers we choose for our own.
Both may we serve, and see
Land and faith strong and free;
Ours be the right way, ready and loyal way.

Then everywhere *in via recta celeriter,*
Prompt to press on let us spring to our work:
Country or School may call: play the game, forward all,
Shoulder to shoulder, disdaining to shirk.
Duty we dare not flee,
Men we all mean to be:
Ours be the right way, steady and sturdy way.

F. R.

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I

ONLY OUR DUTY

Unprofitable servants ; we have (only) done our duty.
—LUKE xvii. 10.

I DO not wonder that Matthew and Mark omitted this parable. My wonder is rather that Luke has the courage to insert it. Even Luke, supreme literary artist though he is, finds it quite impossible to fit it into Christ's teaching, for it seems to me vain to pretend that it has anything whatever to do with its context, and it is best to acknowledge with the French commentator, Godet, that 'it is a remnant scrap at the bottom of Luke's portfolio which he delivers to us as it was and without any introduction,' putting it just where it seems least out of place. A strange, hard parable which at first sight seems to represent God as a

superior slave-owner, getting the last ounce of work out of his slaves and ungraciously grudging them the least atom of thanks. What an inconsistency too between the teaching here and the teaching a little later on in the book in the parable of the pounds, with which you are all familiar! Just compare our text, Luke xvii. 10, 'Unprofitable servants; we have (only) done our duty,' with Luke xix. 17, 'Well done, thou good servant, because thou wast found faithful in a very little'; or with Luke xvi. 10, 'He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.' On the one hand, the master's 'Well done, thou good servant'; on the other hand, the almost supercilious words, slightly more closely rendered by 'He does not thank the servant because he did the things which were commanded, does he? I think not.' Could anything be more contradictory? In the one parable any effort whatever meets with its due meed of praise, and the one thing finally condemned is lack of effort; while in the other toilsome efforts at the end of a tiring day appear to involve only a cold and thankless

censure. In the one parable the slave who has idled half his chances away—for he has gained only five pounds when he has had the chance of earning ten—receives at least a fair equivalent for what he has done, the rulership over five cities and all the spiritual dignity which this involves. In the other parable the slave—the word is the same, and 'slave' renders it better than 'servant'—who has spent literally every moment of his working day in his master's service has not even a 'well-done' at the end of his toil. In the one the slave who half succeeds becomes a king. In the other the slave who wholly succeeds remains a slave. The one gains emancipation and a share in his lord's sovereignty; the other, who has earned the ten cities, retains his fetters. No wonder, I say, that Matthew and Mark did not dare to include this bizarre parable in their collection. Yet I venture to say that Luke nowhere gives a greater proof of his genius than in the fact that he sees that this parable must be Christ's teaching. The key to the situation can be presented in a word, and it

unlocks for us at once all the inconsistencies. This parable views service from what ought to be the point of view of the true servant; the others from what is always the point of view of the master. There are a few words here and there in the parable, it is true, inconsistent with this view, especially the way in which it commences; but these may be taken, perhaps, to indicate that the one who first put the parable in writing scarcely followed its drift. The conclusion is as clear as it is possible for conclusion to be. In the other parables the master said, 'Well done!' In this parable the slave surveys his own labour, and sadly sums it up: 'Badly done! Unprofitable servant! I have only done my duty.'

The tale itself is exceedingly simple, and needs but little exposition. The slave has been all day long under the hot sun in the fields, ploughing or tending sheep. The day is over, and the little household gathers together for the evening meal. This one slave is all the master has. There are great moments of inspiration given to all of us at times when, to

nerve us to better efforts, Christ lets us think that on us alone depends the whole issue in our little world of the fight between good and evil. We are warned to meet these moments with the more courage because the responsibility is so great. If on us alone 'hangs the issue of the day,' then let our arms be nerved with the strength of ten. 'One on God's side is a majority.' The day's work in the fields is done now, and the slave is warned that it is the natural thing that he should be expected to gird up once more the long Eastern robes and fasten them to his belt that he may the more easily serve his master at table. When all this is done he is warned to take no credit to himself to leave the debtor and creditor account to be reckoned up in heaven (God keeps His books exactly), and to call himself 'unprofitable.' This is a poor translation, though it is hard to convey the meaning better in a single word. It means really not so much a man who has done nothing profitable as a man who has done no more than he ought to do, and is an exact equivalent of the words of the second clause

of my text, 'Unprofitable servants,' i.e. servants whose last word on their service is, 'We have only done our duty.' Dismiss from your minds the idea that 'unprofitable' means 'wicked' or 'worthless.' It may mean 'a man who has done what he ought not to do,' but it certainly does not mean this here.

Now let us try to sum up the lessons of our text. They seem to be mainly three:

i. The service of God is not an easy service as viewed by the outsider. God claims all our service. It is our duty to give all.

ii. When all has been done, the servant's view of his own service must be always given in the words of our text, 'Unprofitable servants; we have only done our duty.'

iii. When this admission is made, the true glory of God's service shall dawn upon you.

First, then, *the service of God is not an easy service. God will be satisfied with nothing less than all.* What is this mysterious thing which men call Duty? What is it but, in Wordsworth's phrase, the 'stern daughter of the voice of God'? That Roman sentinel at Pompeii

hears it bid him remain at his post when the fiery ashes are falling around him, while others are fleeing on every side; and there he stays as the boiling mud creeps up to overwhelm him, and there eighteen hundred years later he is discovered at his post at the gates, with the sword still in his nerveless fingers, preaching for all time one of the noblest sermons ever preached. Arnold von Winkelried hears it at the battle of Sempach in 1386 when he shouts, 'Comrades, look after my wife and I will open the way,' and rushes forward to lock all the Austrian spears within his body. The soldiers on the doomed ship *Birkenhead* hear it as they stand quietly at attention on deck while the women and children are saved, and then as the ship sinks under them fire a last salute and 'greet the unseen with a cheer.' Next time you travel from Sheffield to Manchester by the Midland Railway just try to think, when you are in the middle of the mighty tunnel, four miles long, which separates Dore and Totley from the Hathersage Valley, of what happened there when the tunnel was being made. An immense

fall of rock occurred, totally imprisoning the party working at the head. A moment's despair ensued. A mile of solid rock in front before the other heading was reached, thousands of tons of rubbish behind, only a few scraps of bread between the party—what hope was there left? Humanly speaking, none at all. Then spake the Daughter of the Voice of God to one heroic soul there: 'I say, you chaps, we shall never get out of this; we may as well do our bit'; and, nerved by him, the little band took up their tools and attacked, not the rocks behind in a frantic effort to escape, but the solid rock ahead that they might do their 'bit.' I do not desire a better illustration of the spirit in which our parable bids us face life than this: 'I say, you chaps, we shall never get out of this; we may as well do our bit.' You servants of God, you cannot shake yourselves free from the obligation to work. It is not less imperative because it seems hopeless. When you are tired out after a great effort, do not go off into the wilderness like Elijah to growl and complain. Go on working. Remember those fine words of old Bishop

Cumberland's, 'It is better to wear out than to rust out.' There are no furloughs in God's service. God claims all, and, if you will not give Him this, will have none.

> Give all thou hast! High heaven rejects the lore
> Of nicely calculated less or more.

In one particular direction, I think, the teaching of the text is especially needed to-day, when we shunt off so much of what is our own duty on to the shoulders of societies, and regard our obligations as met when we have given a subscription. Is there not a real danger of your supposing that your duty to God is done if you attend your prayer-meetings or your class-meetings? That miserable distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' which has done untold mischief to Christendom is with you always. In the 'sacred' part of your life you are devotedly servants of Christ; in the 'secular' part you claim to be your own masters. You do not see that Christ claims all your time. He claims your school-time. 'Work for Christ' means with many of you only a tithe of what it

ought to mean. The idea that the exceptions in Latin Grammar or the rules of Algebra may be work for Christ has never occurred to you. No boy in school, no apprentice in business, can serve Christ truly if he idles in school or business when the master's glance is turned aside. Did you ever catch the full force of Paul's phrase 'eye-service'? 'Servants,' he says, 'obey in all things . . . not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord'—i.e. 'not with the service which is rendered when the master's eye is upon you,' which is worth very very little; but with that truer faithful service rendered in the fear of the Lord, when the master's eye is not upon you. Christ claims your school-time. When school-time is over He claims your play-time. Try to play with the object of making yourself fit for work. Try to do your duty even in play, and to take the hard work in the football scrum; to sacrifice yourself and pass the ball when another can serve the side better. Your games are not your own, but Christ's. Is there a more appalling word in English than the word

'pastime'—play regarded as a means of 'passing the time'? 'The central idea of a pastime,' I read in my dictionary, 'is that it is so positively agreeable that it lets time slip by unnoticed.' What right have you to let time slip by unnoticed? Christ claims your pastime play. He claims the whole of your time. I seem to hear again that great dialogue between God and His people in rather more modern form: 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? Ye have robbed Me in your *time*, whereof ye give Me but the tenth.'

Christ claims, I say, the whole of your life. One piece of work done is only the signal for another to begin. Range behind range there rise new peaks of service, and as each summit is surmounted another, and higher and harder, lies beyond it. But from each peak that you conquer the view grows grander. Life is not easy, and was never meant to be easy. It was the 'fool' who said, 'Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,' and it is the fool still. Henry Ward Beecher, the great American preacher,

once got a letter from a youth asking him to find him an easy berth. He replied as follows: 'If you wish an easy berth, don't be an editor. Do not try the law. Do not think of the ministry. Avoid school-keeping. Let alone all ships, stores, shops, merchandise. Abhor politics. Don't practise medicine. Be not a farmer or mechanic; neither be a soldier nor sailor. Oh! my friend, you have come into a hard world. I know of but one easy place in it, and that is the grave.'

There is another aspect of my subject which I must pass with a mention. The boy who regards each piece of work as a ticket entitling him to so much rest carries the principle into his spiritual life. His religion is one of fits and starts. One term he is in dead earnest, attends all his meetings, prays at all the prayer-meetings. Next term he begins with a resolve to take things more quietly. After all, he reasons, are there not green pastures and still waters in the Christian's life? And so the lotus-eating begins, and your report upon the boy has to be that he has 'fallen off.' I need not trace him farther. The type

is common enough. I beseech you let not your religion be a Bethesda religion, over whose placid surface there passes at rare moments a moving of the water, when at a certain season 'an angel went down into the pool and troubled the water,' after which there returns the unruffled calm of spiritual stagnation.

I must pass to my second point: *The servant's view of his own service must always be given in the words of our text, 'Unprofitable servants; we have only done our duty.'* The finest test of a man's growth in spirituality is his low estimate of the little he has done, and his crushing sense of the 'vast undone' of life. The nearer we live to the Sun of Righteousness the more clearly the flaws in our character appear to us. At the beginning of his life Paul prided himself on the faithfulness with which he had kept the law. Later, when he writes to the Corinthians, he sees himself as 'unworthy to be called an apostle'; later still, when he writes to the Ephesians, it is 'less than the least of all saints'; and when the old man sits down, as the shadows are closing round him, to write to

Timothy, the words which he finds most appropriate are 'sinners, of whom I am chief.' Ruffinus, a friend of that great saint Francis of Assisi, asked him once to tell him exactly what he thought of himself. 'I esteem myself,' answered Francis, 'the greatest sinner of any in the world, and that I serve God less than any other man.'

It is needless to multiply instances. The biography of any of God's children will supply another. The man who looks back on life, and esteems it other than a failure, has failed indeed, for he has not realized the greatness of God's purposes for him. No true painter fails to see the flaws on his canvas. Where others think he has caught and fixed the likeness, he is conscious that the best part of it has escaped him. So we too, as with faulty faltering brush we try to fill in the portrait of Himself which Christ commissions each one of us to leave as his legacy to the world, must be conscious that we have marred His image in innumerable places. Well indeed for us if others can but faintly trace in our portrait the lines of the grand original

but our verdict must always be, 'Unprofitable servants.' And in this very humility of soul lies our truest chance of spiritual advancement. There is a

> Stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too,
> The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
> As by each new obeisance in spirit I climb to His feet.

Lastly, I wish to study those deeper features of our parable which take every touch of hardness away from it. How comes it that the slaves of Christ boast of their chains? Again and again Paul puts in the forefront of his letters as his title of honour, 'Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ.' A strange slavery this, which the proud Roman citizen feels added pride in confessing! For this slavery has this distinctive mark about it, that every atom of the slave spirit has vanished from it.

> Servants of God!—or sons
> Shall I not call you? because
> Not as servants ye knew
> Your Father's innermost mind.

The servile, cringing spirit, ever anxious to avoid new tasks, has passed away, and given

place to the filial spirit, to which every new task which the Father appoints is but a new joy. Rest, as the natural result of work? Why, that is but the animal's view of life. To a nobler spirit the best result of work is added capacity for higher work, and he who has not yet learnt this has not yet wholly left the brute behind in the development of his soul. Plutarch, in his *Life of Lycurgus*, tells a tale of one of the competitors in the Olympic games who, after great difficulty, had won his match and thrown his antagonist. 'And now, Sir Lacedaemonian,' said one of the spectators, 'what are you the better for your victory?' A fair question surely when the only prize was a few leaves; but the man's proud answer was, 'I shall fight next the king,' alluding to their custom that the king should always have about him in battle one who had been crowned in the Olympic games. 'None the better, but in the battle I shall fight next the king.' We have the same point in our parable. The day's work begins in the distant fields. It ends in intimate association with the Master Himself. The reward for

service is for more service; but that service is more personal, more intimate, more loving. This is not all, however. The parable shows, and is meant to show, what the servant's view of his service is. Yet even here it is not without the lighter touch: 'Afterward thou shalt eat and drink.' But when we pass from the service which man deserves and would be happy in to the service which God appoints, we find Him infinitely more tender to our weakness than we ought to be to our own. As walking out on Lansdown I thought upon this subject, there came over me like a flood of wonder the vision of another supper-table where the Master Himself, Very God of Very God, girded Himself. 'He riseth from supper and layeth aside His garments, and He took a towel and girded Himself, and He poureth water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet.' Be assured that if after your hard day's work you gird yourself and resolve to wait upon the Lord anew there will again rise One from the table who shall bid you sit, and then shall take all the weariness from your tired feet. The true complement of

this parable is that earlier one in Luke: 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them' (Luke xii. 37).

We are beginning a new year and a new term. The moment is really one of inexpressible solemnity. God has taken the blurred pages of your lives with their erasures and mistakes, and turned them right over out of sight. He is willing to forget all about them. A clean page lies before you. What are you going to write upon it? Shall it be the same tangled tale of error as before? Nay, I pray that some of you this very night upon your knees may resolve that the first lines shall be, 'I choose God for my Lord and Master, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; and I vow henceforth to render Him loyal service in everything. I give up my own will. It shall be Christ's will. And I dedicate myself to Him in all things.' A hard life, do you call it? Nay, there are none so free as the slaves of Christ.

II

A PENNY EACH

They received every man a penny.—MATT. XX. 9.

IF we are to understand this parable aright, we must study it, as we must study all the words of Christ, and, in fact, every word of the Bible, in connexion with its context. The narrative really begins with the point at which I commenced in our Second Lesson, namely, with the history of the young country squire who comes to Christ and asks Him how he may work his way into the Kingdom. 'Master, what good thing shall I *do* that I may have eternal life?' Christ's answer to him is that it is not 'doing' but sacrifice that is called for. His acts, He tells him, are right, but they cost him nothing; they are part of an easy routine of habit. 'All these things have I observed from my youth up.'

Good, but therefore it never cost you any effort to observe them. Give everything; 'Sell that thou hast and give to the poor,' that so thou mayest inherit the earth; and the Kingdom, with all the wealth of the King, be yours. But the bargain seemed bad to him. He was 'greedy for quick returns of profit.' He rejected it, and 'went away sorrowful.' Then comes Peter, thinking aloud, as his impetuous way is. What should we do without Peter? Peter is always thinking aloud the things we are ashamed to say, but think as often as he did. Nobody ever wronged Peter as much as Peter did himself. 'Surely,' he says to himself, 'surely if the Kingdom is a matter of cost, it has cost us enough.' So his thoughts take shape: 'Lo! we have left all and followed Thee: what then shall we have?' Poor Peter, what had he left? A few miserable nets and a precarious living in the most precarious of callings to follow one whom he believed to be a coming King who should drive the hated Roman back to Rome, and bring glory and power to all who followed Him. Ah! but Christ does not answer

him thus. It would usually have been easy to be sarcastic with Peter, but Christ is tender as He always is with honesty, however mistaken. He even takes up and spiritualizes the dream of power which has been floating before Peter's eyes: 'Peter, ye who have followed Me, shall in the regeneration, when the "first heaven and the first earth are passed away," and the world is born again, ye shall "inherit the earth," ye shall have your reward in a kingship indeed, "ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"'—there was a throne ready for Judas, you see, if he had cared to take it—'ye shall have your reward a hundredfold; but remember, Peter, that God judges not as man judges: "Many shall be last that are first, and first that are last."'

Then follows this remarkable parable, which has provoked, perhaps, more interpretations and conjectures than any other parable except that of the Unjust Steward. Yet, in view of what we have been saying, the main drift of it, surely, is clear. Work, Christ seems to say to us from beginning to end of it, work must be judged by

the spirit of the worker and not by the amount done.

> Not on the vulgar mass
> Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
> Things done that took the eye and had the price;
> O'er which from level stand
> The low world laid its hand,
> Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:
> But all the world's coarse thumb
> And finger failed to plumb,
>
> All instincts immature,
> All purposes unsure,
>
> This I was worth to God.

I must return to the teaching of the parable in a moment; meanwhile, let me note that it was immediately misunderstood. Surely one of the hardest things Christ had to bear was the spiritual blindness of His hearers. For He had scarcely finished speaking when His own aunt came up, and brought His cousins with her, to claim a special privilege for them in what she apparently still believed to be an earthly kingdom; and this privilege was claimed not because their work was better than that of others, but on the lowest ground of favouritism, because they were her sons and Christ's kinsmen. Again

Christ had to point the moral that the prizes of God's kingdom had to be earned by a baptism of blood, and even then were given only to those 'for whom' they had been 'prepared of the Father.'

Now as to the parable itself. The picture is very familiar. There is the master, so anxious for his vineyard that he gets up 'just at the same time as the sunrise,' for so, or nearly so, the Greek says, that he may get all the labour that is to be had; the group in the market-place of the little village waiting already, though it is only six a.m., spade in hand, for any work the day might send, their immediate engagement at what Cicero tells us was the current wages in Rome for a day-labourer in his time, the Roman penny, say, about sevenpence of our money. Then at nine o'clock the master goes forth again, so anxious to do the best he can for his vineyard that he does not send his steward, but goes himself—just as Christ came Himself all the weary way from heaven to earth to seek us. He finds others in the market-place, 'idle.' They had not been there when he came first, but

had waked up later to the need for work. The master does not reproach them with this; it is not his way. He offers them work at once. Apparently they too stop for a moment to haggle, and Peter's question is on their lips, 'What shall we have, then?' 'Have?' said the master. 'Why trouble yourself with that? I am known all over the village. Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.' They knew him, they trusted him, and went. There is already something more admirable in their spirit than in that of the earlier labourers. They do not stop to conclude a definite bargain. The earlier ones did. Not a foot would they put to spade or hoe until the definite bargain for a penny a day had been concluded. They had brought the shop-spirit into all they did. The 'What shall we have?' had coloured it all. They were anxious rather to get a day's pay for a day's work than to do a day's work for a day's pay. They did all their work, as has been said, 'to the ring of coin, and not to the music of love.'

At noon again the master sets out in quest

of workers, and repeats his invitation ; and yet once more at three o'clock. At five o'clock ('the eleventh hour') he finds that there is still more work to be done than the workers can do, and yet once again himself sets out in person to the market-place, and finds a little group there. 'Idle now,' he says, 'when the day is nearly over?' 'Lord, we haven't had the chance to work,' they say. 'No man hath hired us. We did not know there was any work for us to do.'

It was not wholly true. They had not been at the market-place at three o'clock. It was too hot, and they preferred to enjoy life. The master does not stop to reproach even them. 'Go ye into the vineyard. There is always work there.'

Then comes the payment of wages at six o'clock, compulsory under Jewish law upon the same day as the work is done. The master does not pay the wages himself, but leaves it to his steward, a shade of scorn implied, perhaps, upon wages as such, and upon a hireling's work done only for what it brings. They who have worked for one hour only, and that in the cool of

the day, are paid first, and to their delighted astonishment receive the full day's payment; while they who have borne 'the burden of the day and the scorching heat,' as the R.V. so picturesquely puts it, get only their penny too. The five-o'clock labourers have earned their penny and the 'harvest of a quiet mind'; the early morning labourers their penny also, but their harvest is the tares of discontent, and so 'the last is first and the first last.'

Now what do we learn from this parable? The main lessons, I take it, are three:

i. 'All service ranks the same with God.'

ii. God does not pay by piece-work or by time.

iii. The only possible excuse for idleness, and that a bad one, is, 'No man hath hired us.'

Perhaps it may prevent confusion if I say that I shall deliberately use the word 'work' in what may seem to be two senses—for what we know as Christian work, and for what we call secular work. I find it increasingly hard to recognize any distinction between the two. I am as definitely doing God's work when I try to teach you

(the Kingswood boys) mathematics as when I stand here.

i. '*All service ranks the same with God.*' There was, no doubt, work of all kinds to be done in the vineyard. It is idle to speculate much upon the time of the year to which this incident refers, but from the master's anxiety to get workers very early in the morning we may safely assume that the time of the vintage is close, perhaps even that the vintage is actually taking place. In that case all varieties of workers would be needed. There would be the skilled worker who at a glance could tell whether a particular bunch of grapes ought or ought not to be carried to the press, for one bunch may easily spoil a vintage. And there would be the mere porter who carried the grape-baskets on his head to the wine-press. But no matter how great or how little, how dignified or how humble, the reward is the same at the end of the day:

> God judges by a light
> Which baffles mortal sight,
> And the useless-seeming man the crown hath won.

Now I venture to say that this is a lesson

which Kingswood boys need more than any other boys in the three kingdoms. The average Kingswood boy—and I speak as one—starts with the fixed idea, an idea rather fostered by the phrases which we use, that any man will serve God best if he goes into the ministry—that this is, in fact, the highest type of service which he can offer. The very word 'ministry' = God's service, contains this idea in itself. Believe me, it is a delusion. Will you suffer a family reminiscence? My father started life as a printer. When he entered the ministry his work was owned by the conversion of, literally, tens of thousands. Yet I doubt if he ever did truer, nobler work for God than he did as a printer. For, listen! He and his brother Edward are standing together in their little printing-office at Dursley, yonder there in the Cotswolds, a few miles north of Bath. 'Edward,' said my father, 'I am thinking of entering the Wesleyan ministry.' On this Edward, my wife's father, took up the heavy metal composing-stick with which he was working. 'John, if you do,' he said, 'I will brain you with this stick.' But John

stuck to his purpose, and such was the effect of his quiet Christian life that Edward followed him into the ministry. I say again that my father never did better work for God during his ministerial course. We use phrases, false phrases, which are all against this view. I read in our Methodist papers of 'God having called a man to the higher work of the ministry.' I object altogether to the adjective. The ministry is not necessarily 'higher' work than it is to be a road-mender; quite conceivably, indeed, it may be lower. There are not, with God, ranks of service as there are in the army, generalships to which come earldoms and pensions, and private soldiers' places to which come most of the blows and few of the pence.

Surely God must regard with something like scorn our phrase 'the humbler walks of life,' a phrase meant to convey pity and some contempt for them that walk therein, seeing that it is definitely to the 'poor in spirit,' the humble, that the kingdom of heaven has been assigned. If I may speak for a moment to those who are near the threshold of life, to those who will

presently have the future to carve out for themselves, I woul say, with all earnestness, in choosing your career in life let the guiding principle of your choice be not so much to aim high as to choose that career in which you can use the talents God has given you to their fullest, and thus do God's work the best. Remember him who 'did God's will, to him all one, If on the earth or in the sun.' Remember that you may serve Him as well in the counting-house as in the pulpit. Do not imagine that the only preachers worth hearing are those who stand in a pulpit. Do not imagine that in an army all the work is done in the fighting-line, for work equally valuable—perhaps more so, because less noticed—may be done on the lines of communication or in the Army Service Corps. Choose the work for which your talents fit you best, without any thought whether it is higher or lower, for with work well done there is no higher or lower.

> There is no last nor first,
> All service ranks the same with God.

Is not this the true medicine for the weary

discontent which often makes life so hard to bear? The teacher teaching dull grammar to duller boys; the clerk adding up a ceaseless round of figures, content, perforce, at times to spend an hour in detecting a mistake of a penny; the tradesman behind the counter selling his pennyworths to uninteresting people,—each and all wonder at times whether they may not be fit for higher things. They may, it is true; but also they may be doing just the very work which God sent them into the world to do, work which no other could do as well. When once you are certain that your path of life is the path which God has chosen for you, chosen often enough by the simple process of shutting the gates to all other paths rather than by erecting any finger-post to lead you to it—when once you have got that conviction, beware of murmuring that your work is mean. Jane Welsh Carlyle was not far from right when she came to the conclusion that the painting of a Madonna could not mean more to God than the perfect baking of a loaf of bread. John Newton, the famous preacher, once said

that if two angels were sent down from heaven, one to conduct an empire and the other to sweep a street, they would feel no inclination to change employment ; and two hundred years before him the saintly George Herbert had said :

> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
> Makes that and the action fine.

I must be content with a very brief treatment of the rest of my subject.

ii. *God does not pay by piece-work, nor by time.* You know that when you have some work to do you may either make a rough estimate of the time and skill required and offer so much for the work as a whole—that is piece-work ; or you may offer the worker so much an hour and expect him to do his best—that is time-work. Neither method is God's. Never fall into the mistake of supposing that for sixpennyworth of work you may always expect sixpennyworth of reward. God does not sell heaven at so much the acre. The arithmetic of God's bills is hard to understand. It is not the work itself for which God pays, it is the effort which is made,

the spirit in which the work is done. God does not need our work. He could do without it all.

> The Lord is God; He needeth not
> The poor device of man.

With a touch of His hand He might bring His kingdom in. Why, then, does He not do so? Why entrust the coming of His kingdom to such poor bunglers as we? Because the task which God has assigned to Himself is soul-making, to make men in the image of God; and since God is Work as well as Love, there is no other way in which He may carry out His purpose than to let man, in his own imperfect fashion, work. But it is only of God's bounty that such work is paid for; and it never is paid for if payment is expected. It is not worth paying for in itself; but if done humbly in consciousness of its imperfections, earnestly because it is so little that we can do, and lovingly because it is the task the Master set,

> Only they shall miss the Master's praise,
> When the day closes and the shadows fall,
> Who idly standing with averted gaze,
> Intent on pleasure heeded not the call,

Or scorned the task because it was not great,
Or when the battle raged about the wall,
Looked coldly down and left the award to fate.

iii. *The only possible excuse for idleness is, 'No man hath hired us.'* The only possible excuse, and it cannot be yours. You have had the call echoing in your ears ever since you learnt to talk. Yet some have let it pass when it came in their school-days; have let it pass when it came to them in the heat of the outer day, and are still standing in the market-place idle. It is getting almost old-fashioned in these sadly decorous days to make a personal appeal. Yet, since I know that for some daylight is drifting by, I would beg you to heed the call now. Can you say when the Master comes to you at five o'clock in the day of your life, as He came to these workers in the market-place, when the sun is setting and the air grows chilly and the shadows are creeping over you, can you say when the Master asks you wherefore you have idled—nay, you know you can never say, 'No man hath hired us.' Come to-night. There is work for all in the vineyard, and you

have the long day before you, and God's vineyard may be the brighter and sweeter and cleaner even for your day's work in it. Come at once, and 'work while it is day, for the night cometh in which no man can work.' My oldest school friend (Fred Kellett) was called to his reward after heroic work in India (the first of Kingswood's Senior Prefects to go). The last words which he was heard to utter as he was lapsing into unconsciousness were, 'Jesus, I have tried; Jesus, I have tried.' May those be your last words too, 'Jesus, I have tried; Jesus, I have tried'!

III

THE TWO SONS

I go, sir : and went not.—MATT. xxi. 30

THE parable which I propose to ask you to study with me this evening was spoken in the Temple at Jerusalem on the Tuesday before the Crucifixion. The shadow of death was upon Christ, but there was also a shadow whose gloom was perhaps greater still, that of the sense of failure. It is always difficult to say anything involving the relationship of the two natures which were blended together in our Lord. The divine Christ knew that He could not fail, that seeming human failure meant only the more assured eternal success, that crowned with a crown of thorns the King had come to His own again, as King of kings and Lord of lords. But in this last week we see more of the

human Jesus than of the divine Christ. It is not in Gethsemane only that He was 'exceeding sorrowful even unto death,' and I think that in many of the utterances of the last week we catch something of the sobs which overwhelmed Him when, on His way from Bethany, He rounded a corner of the Mount of Olives and caught sight of the sudden splendour of Jerusalem. And that which underlay the tears of the man Jesus may well have been, in part, the pain of rejection, the agony of failure. He had come unto His own, and His own received Him not. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'

This sense of failure finds a direct expression in two of the five parables which were spoken in the week—the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in the Vineyard who murdered all their master's servants and crowned their crimes by the murder of his son, and the parable of the

King's Marriage Feast to which no guests came except the tramps—and it colours at least the expression of a third of the five, the one which we are studying this evening, the parable of the Two Sons, as it is usually called ; for of these two sons neither really does the Father's will on earth as it is done in heaven, and the best approach to such obedience is made by one who at first sulkily refuses to obey at all. I want you to remember this fact, for there is just a little danger in the study of this parable that it should be supposed that one or other of these types of men represents every professing Christian ; whereas, in order that the parable should be complete, it would really have been necessary for Christ to have pictured four sons at least, not two :

The son who said, 'I go, sir : and went'— immediate unquestioning obedience to the father's voice whenever heard.

The son who said, 'I will not : and went'— disobedience conquered by the thought of the father's love.

The son who said, 'I go, sir : and went not'—

ready with his promises, more than slack in their performance.

The son who said, 'I will not: and went not'—disobedience that is at least consistent, a man who, if Christ had arranged these four in the order in which the father loved them, would not have stood last;

with possibly a fifth type, who is certainly not represented here—the son who had not yet heard his father's call to go.

Now let us read this parable together, pausing here and there over a word or phrase that we may catch its full meaning.

A man had two sons. 'Children' would be a better translation. The word conveys just a little more love than the word for 'sons.' The pains and the yearning love of the birth-pang hang about it still. The word 'bairn' is its precise equivalent. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the boys are called 'sons' throughout, except just at the last when the father wishes to soothe the injured feelings of the elder boy, and to do so he says, not as our Version runs, 'Son, thou art ever with me,'

but, in far tenderer fashion, 'Child, bairnie, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.'

A man had two children, and he came to the first and said, 'Child.' Every little touch is tender. He came himself. No hired messenger would serve. He came just as God comes Himself to fetch us, with that same tender word, 'child,' 'bairnie.'

'Child, go work to-day in the vineyard.' It may be intended to suggest that they had never worked before, that they were young, and, as yet, had contented themselves with standing round to see their father work, but that now the father feels age and the need of rest stealing over him. In any case, the father is represented as a poor man, for there is no suggestion of hired servants. The vineyard is his own, perhaps his only possession. Even so is God Himself poor in workers. 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.' Every son of God is needed.

'Go work.' After all, there is love even in this. Never forget that 'diligence is only the

Latin word for love.' The motive power of all true work is love.

And he answered and said, 'I will not.' Perhaps 'I won't' conveys the meaning better. It is as abrupt as it can be. There is no such term of respect, 'Sir,' as the second son uses.

But afterwards he repented himself, and went. Here the English reader again misses a point of great importance. There are two Greek words in the New Testament translated 'repent.' The first, and the common one, which is used more than fifty times, means nothing more than a 'change of mind.' The second, which is used (in verb and in compounds) only eight times, is the word employed here and in the application of the parable in verse 32. It means a great deal more than 'change of mind.' We have not got any single English word to express it exactly. It is stronger than 'regret,' far stronger than 'repent,' and not much weaker than 'to be filled with remorse.' If you will turn to Matt. xxvii. 3 you will see that when Judas, in his partly selfish anxiety to make his Master declare Himself the Messiah, tries to force that

Master's hand by selling Him to the priests, and finds that after all he has condemned to death one whom he really loves, he 'is filled with remorse'—'he repented himself' is far too weak—a remorse so great that in his madness he dashes up the steps right into the Holy Place which none but priests are allowed to enter, and flings the money down upon its marble floor. This is the word used here.

Afterwards he was filled with remorse. The boy, when he thought of his father's kindness to him and of the miserably sulky return he had made, was 'filled with remorse.' There is always something noble in repentance of this kind, even in a Judas. To sin is easy; to repent is hard; to express repentance is harder still. 'Men,' says Defoe, in our old friend *Robinson Crusoe*, 'are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action for which they ought to be esteemed fools, but are ashamed of the returning which only can make them be esteemed wise men.'

And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir': and went

not. I despair of rendering the second son's answer. There is a smug self-satisfaction about it which no English can quite reproduce. The word 'I' appears in the Greek, and whenever this is the case it is always emphatic. We cannot leave it out in English, but it can be left out in Greek, and always is left out unless some emphasis is desired. And the emphasis this objectionable creature desires is to point out the contrast between his action and his brother's. Doubtless he had been standing near and listening—eavesdropping perhaps. 'Never mind, father, what my brother says. He says, "I won't"; but you know you can trust me. I will go. You can always trust me.' The same point is brought out further by the fact that the Greek does not contain the word 'go.' The only word expressed is an emphatic 'I.' We can perhaps get something of the force if we may be pardoned a colloquialism and render it, 'I am your man, sir.' 'Sir'—he has noted his brother's curt 'I won't' and the shade of displeasure which passed over his father's face when no title of respect was added, and he is

careful of the 'sir,' like the Pharisees of whom he is the type, ever anxious to appear 'outwardly righteous unto men, but inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity.' Now shall we read the parable again?

'A man had two children, and he came to the first and said, "Child, go work to-day in the vineyard," and he answered and said, "I won't"; but afterwards he was filled with remorse, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, "I am your man, sir"—and went not.'

Let us look first for awhile at the son who said, 'I won't.' He is a common enough type. There are plenty of him among us. I do not know much of the religious life of other schools, but I fancy that this son is rather commoner here than elsewhere—the son, I mean, who not merely says, 'I won't,' but who afterwards is filled with remorse, and goes. The son who says, 'I won't,' and does not, is perhaps commoner elsewhere. It is worthy of note, indeed, that our most important MS. of the Greek Testament puts this son second. If we imagine

that the father had really spoken to the other first, and that young 'I won't' standing by had heard and understood the meaninglessness of the profession of the first, and in disgust had resolved to be true to himself and not to profess what he did not intend to perform, we get a very close approximation to a type exceedingly common in the world. There are those everywhere who are very fond of listening to the profession of others, and with the greatest accuracy and delicacy will weigh the worth of that profession, correct to the last decimal place, and then decide that 'I won't' is the nobler answer for them. They are Pharisees, but of a strange type. 'The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself'—this type of Pharisee always prays with himself—'God, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men—that I make no promises which I cannot perform, that at least I am sincere; God, I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men.' There are some of these Pharisees here—there are few audiences without them; and I want a few plain words with them before I go farther. I have three thoughts for them:

i. There is no special virtue and no strength of mind implied in saying this 'I won't.' Mostly laziness.

ii. The feeblest failure after effort is worth a thousand times more than all your blustering 'I won'ts.'

iii. You cannot slip out of your obligations by refusing to recognize them.

It is a curious fact, but fact it is, that the 'I won'ts' of this type are usually proud of themselves. They are Pharisees who often think themselves Sadducees, the sceptics of Christ's day. It has been well said that 'the frank confession that they are not good seems to serve some men as a substitute for goodness.' These men are the outside critics of a battle, who from the lazy ease of a study arm-chair will criticize the details of a Thorneycroft's surrender at Spion Kop. 'I don't profess to be a soldier,' they will tell you, 'but if I had been I would have fought better than that.' They are ready enough, these study tacticians, to forget all the strain of the long night which preceded the surrender, of the toilsome march of the

troops in the darkness up the hill to find themselves when morning broke shelterless, waterless, and hemmed in by fire. The cheap advice is always on their tongues that a man who cannot die where he stands has no business to be a soldier at all. They find it quite delightfully easy to die by proxy!

Again, *The feeblest failure after effort is worth a thousand times more than 'I won't.'* There was never a moral gladiator whom the down-turned thumbs of the amphitheatre condemned to death who was not worth more than they who doomed him and lazily turned to their neighbours to remark how miserably the wretch had fought. 'Miserably'—yes, but he had fought, and Clough's lines remain immortally true:

> 'Tis better to have fought and lost
> Than never to have fought at all.

Your efforts to follow Christ may be feeble and faltering, you may stumble at every step, your clothes may be plastered from head to foot with the mud of the way; but Christ will never smile at your stumbles, and they who stand on one

side on the clean grass of Bypath Meadow and make mock at your plight are surely worse off than you.

The last word I have to say to the 'I won'ts' is this: *You cannot slip out of your obligations by refusing to recognize them.* You are in Christ's army, and you know it. There is not a boy here who in his heart of hearts does not know he ought to be following Christ. When the trumpet sounds for the battle—and it is sounding now—what will you say to the Captain of the Lord's hosts? Shall it be, 'Captain, those raw recruits of yours fight so badly that I really would rather not fight at all. I will stay behind and criticize the plan of campaign'? What would be said of a soldier who spoke thus? Short shrift indeed—a handkerchief over his eyes, a squad told off, a volley, and a nameless grave. That's all you are worth unless, like this child in the parable, you are filled with remorse, and beg for a place in the fighting-line. Oh, I would I could touch you arm-chair critics of the fight, and show your souls to you as they are, stripped

of all pretences, naked in their shallow, cowardly selfishness before God. Do the raw recruits fight badly? Well, any fool can criticize. In God's name, take your sword in your hand man, and help them to fight better.

We turn now to the second child. Now it may be that he never really meant to go at all, that he was a hypocrite from first to last; and some expositors find a hint to this effect in 'I go, sir: and went not,' instead of 'I go, sir: but went not.' But I doubt it, and am inclined to think that no man was ever yet wholly insincere. At all events, I am certain that there are none such here, and I do not think that any such thought as this was in Christ's mind. The child stands as a type of the Pharisees who may not have meant all they said, but did mean some of it, while some of them meant all of it. Paul belonged to the 'strictest sect of the Pharisees.' Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and both before and after Christ's time there were many great and good men in their ranks. So that I think we may fairly widen our view of this second child, and take him as a type of those who

profess at first to be Christ's, but whose practice falls miserably short of their profession. 'I go, sir'—how many of us have said this!—'and went not'—how many of us have been satisfied with a profession which we really meant at the time, or have gone a little way and then stopped, or have actually reached the vines and failed to do our work when we got there! Let us look a little while at two of these classes of those who say, 'I go, sir,' and go not; at two only, for the third class, those who reach the vines and fail to do or only half do their work, are the subject of another parable.

There is, first, the class of professors, pure and simple. Mere profession suffices; at all events, they rarely get far beyond such. It is a common enough type. I could talk the average boy into saying, 'I go, sir,' in something under five minutes, and probably the average girl in less. I have done it often, and mourned before God that I could do no more. Force a few cheap tears, and the thing is done. The boy really means his 'I go, sir,' at the time, and he means it until he just gets outside my study

door and mixes with the silly crowd who want to know ' what the Head has been saying.' Then it becomes clear to the angels that the seed has fallen by the wayside, and the birds of the air, poor foolish creatures, flock up to devour it. This sort of thing is sadly common and infinitely distressing to the Christian worker. What does it mean, and what is the cure for it ? It means that the promise has never really gripped the boy's personality, that his emotion has been touched, but not his will—and therein lies the danger of appeals from the pulpit to the emotions, and the cause of the instability of much revival work. The work has been man's, not God's. When God grips a man He does not easily let go. A man in the grip of his emotions is at the mercy of every wind. He has no hold outside himself. There were many such among those who swept over the Mount of Olives on the Sunday with their hosannas, and five days later, just giving time for the palm-leaves to wither, clamoured round Pilate's bar, ' Crucify Him, crucify Him.' They say that once a man converted under the preaching

of Mr. John Wesley was soon afterwards found sodden by drink. 'A fine convert of yours, Mr. Wesley,' said one to him. 'You speak true, sir,' said Mr. Wesley, 'that is none of God's making.' You have known, I doubt not, many a boy to pray most zealously in the prayer-meeting who would win a deeper respect if his life were a silent prayer; you have known many a man a pillar of the Church who would have won a wider following if in his business relations he always did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God. Such inconsistencies are often labelled insincerity, but I think wrongly. It is sincerity, but of the skin-deep, emotional type that has never yet struck roots into the deeper soil of the man's will. He is not of 'God's making,' only of man's. God builds better than that. He lays His foundations deeper, and uses solider stone, not rubble.

Then, lastly, there is the class of those who really start and never reach the vines. The roots of their faith have struck right through the shifting sands of emotion, and obtained some hold on the will beneath, but it is not a deep

one. There is Mr. Pliable, who stands the jeers of Mr. Obstinate—and a man who can stand sneers must have something in him—and sets gaily out with Christian towards the Celestial City, dreaming of the glories that await him, and in an altogether heavenly frame of mind until he meets with the Slough of Despond. You will note that with consummate art Bunyan makes the two men to be talking about heaven at the very moment when they fall into the Slough. That is enough for Pliable. 'If we have such ill-speed,' he says, 'at our first setting out, what may we not expect between this and our journey's end? May I get out again with my life, you shall possess the brave country alone for me.'

So he struggles muddily back home, and there, snugly ensconced by the fireplace, he finds our old friend the arm-chair critic. 'So his neighbours came to visit him; and some of them called him Wise Man for coming back, and some called him Fool for hazarding himself with Christian; others again did mock at his cowardliness, saying, "Surely since you began

to venture, I would not have been so base as to have given out for a few difficulties." '

And that is the end of Mr. Pliable. He had not counted the cost. He was ready for a crown, but not for the crown of thorns. We can imagine this second son really starting for his work, but as he climbed the precipitous hillside, where the vines were clinging, and as the sun slowly mounted the Eastern sky to his blazing noonday, the resolution gets weaker and weaker until he sits in the shade to rest, and falls asleep. He meant his 'I go, sir,' and he really started; but he 'went not.'

Now make no mistake, you who are starting for the vines. It is hard work God calls you to, hard work under hot, unpleasant conditions. He does not say, 'Go talk,' 'Go pray,' 'Go dream.' Crowds of Kingswood boys would obey Him if He did. We are most of us ready to talk—we inherit the 'vice'—and praying is very easy, and dreaming is delightful. But it is not for us to 'sit and sing our souls away.' The command is, 'Go work.' The boy who says, 'I go, sir,' and idles, or lies, or dallies

with impurity, is definitely of the 'went-not' class, though he sit all day long in the shade and sing his soul away. The boy who says, 'I go, sir,' must expect to meet difficulties. He must not be disappointed if difficulty follows difficulty, if

> When he looks for crowns to fall,
> He finds the tug's to come—that's all.

He must not allow himself to be discouraged by the arm-chair critics who never fought a battle except on paper. And he has always this to remember, and this to help him. The Father has called him 'Child,' 'Bairnie,' and the Father has sent him into His own vineyard: 'Child, go work to-day in My vineyard.' The weeds may be there, and the soil may be hard and stony, and the sun may beat pitilessly down upon him, and often it will seem that the more he tries the less he accomplishes; yet still it is 'My vineyard': 'Child, go work to-day in My vineyard.' Will you go?

IV

TEMPTATION

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to them that love Him.—JAS. i. 12.

THE Epistle of James, to the first chapter of which you listened in the Second Lesson, is the earliest book of the New Testament, written, in all probability, long before the Gospels and a few years at least before Paul's earliest letter. The writer of the Epistle is Christ's own brother, perhaps one of that very group of 'friends' who endeavoured to have Him put under restraint, 'for they said, "He is beside Himself."' The words of the text certainly, and many other words of the Epistle probably, are Christ's own words,[1] treasured up,

[1] This is not the place for any detailed attempt to justify this statement. Substantially they are quoted as Christ's by John in the Revelation, by Paul in the Second Letter to Timothy, and by Polycarp in his Epistle to the Philippians. Further, James himself explicitly and directly puts them down to Christ. See Resch, *Agrapha, Aussercanonische Evangelien-fragmente*, S. 252.

despite himself, in His brother's mind, though not to be found in any Gospel. Christ's own brother, I say, the son of Mary and Joseph, a younger brother, of course, by a year or two, but one of the family whose names St. Mark records for us (Mark vi. 3). I wonder why we think so little about Christ's brothers and sisters? Luke never troubles to mention them at all. Mark names them only once, and then passes by the sisters in silence. Yet surely we can never know a man completely unless we know his home life. We must utterly fail to understand Christ's human life if we picture the home at Nazareth with but the lonely greatness of the Christ-child within it, and forget that He had four brothers and at least two sisters. Try to reconstruct for a moment the family life in that humble home. There is Mary, the mother, a widow soon after Christ had left boyhood behind, passing her days, I think, in a deepening silence as she wonderingly watched her son's development, keeping a record perhaps, after awhile, of all His sayings, as fond mothers will, and, at all events, 'pondering them in her

heart.' There is that eldest son, the Christ to be, the bread-winner of the family, carrying on His father's business of carpentry, spending His time for the most part in the making of rough wooden ploughs :

> And ever o'er the trade He bent,
> And ever lived on earth content
> (He did God's will ; to Him all one,
> If on the earth or in the sun).

'Content' always, though the inexorable years brought the shadow of death ever closer, and must have brought a graver look into His face. Then there are those brothers, James and Joses and Jude and Simon, no doubt with many a rough word, many a taunt, urging the visionary to stick to His bench and forget His visions. Then there are the sisters (surely Mary would be the name of one of them !), and perhaps they understood Him a little better. Now of these brothers, two, James and Jude, have left writings behind them in the New Testament which show us a little of their character, and would enable us, if time allowed, to fill in the details of our fancy picture of the

Nazareth home. Of James one thing is certain, that during Christ's lifetime he did not believe in His mission. Yet another thing is about as certain as criticism can make it, namely, that, though more than half sceptical, he followed his brother's career with intense interest, and, despite the fact that the Gospels never mention his presence (the James who is mentioned is his cousin), was often with Him in His preaching. We have surely a right to infer this from the fact that in this Epistle there are not less than forty references to the Sermon on the Mount, and many others to other parts of Christ's teaching, and this, mind you, in an Epistle written twenty years at least before the Gospels came into existence. How do these references come there? Cannot you see James there on the outskirts of that crowd with his brothers and sisters? We are told of his presence on one occasion, and of an attempt he made to stop the sermon by sending a message to his brother that He was wanted. This Epistle tells us indirectly of his presence at a dozen other times, and shows how James,

unwilling, was yet against himself, so far a captive to the teaching that ten or fifteen years later the very words of it echo in his mind—'old, forgotten, far-off things,' maybe, with an unconscious lodgement, but so firmly fixed that here and there the Epistle reads like a copy of that of which at the time no written copy existed.

Later James drifted away from the family—married perhaps, for you will note that it was not to him but to their cousin John that our dying Lord commended His mother. But God had not done with James yet! Conviction came to him as it came to Paul. The risen Lord appeared to him, and in a moment

The Truth was flashed out by one blow,

Thenceforward there was no wavering for that strong soul, whom his contemporaries called 'James the Just.' As the eldest representative of Christ's family, he springs at once to the head of the little church at Jerusalem, and there he remains, until, somewhere about the time when Paul is writing his letter to the Philippians,

he ended a long life as a martyr. Stoned to death, his last recorded words were again a reminiscence of his brother's, caught, no doubt, as once more, for the last time, he stood on the outer fringe of the crowd around his brother's cross : ' O Lord God my Father, I beseech Thee forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

Temptation! That is the subject of our thought this evening. What a strange thing it is ! The spectacle before us is that of a world of hindrances, a world that might have been so easy and so pleasant, but which hard fate has made so difficult and so toilsome. Why? Why is the soul which fain would take wings compelled by a kind of moral gravitation to grovel,

> Groundling through the fleshly chain?

Why are moments of spiritual exaltation so closely followed by moments of spiritual depression? We are never so sure we can stand as the moment before our fall. We are gloriously confident at the very instant when the destroying

armies have pitched their camp around our city. Why is it? If we had ordered the world, we think we could have managed better. There should have been no hindrance in the upward path, and the gates of the downward roads should all have been barred and doubly locked. A narrow way to heaven, a broad way to hell, is surely an absurdity. We, as the engineers of our fate, should have managed better. We would have planned a broad way to heaven on a very easy gradient, guide-posts everywhere, and the branch paths all steeply uphill and leading nowhere, so that the worst which could happen to a wayfarer astray would be a little lost time.

Are we right, and are matters thus because God cannot do otherwise? or are we wrong because God will not do otherwise? Let us say at once that there is no absolutely certain answer to these questions; at best an answer which growing knowledge renders more and more probable, and in which as a man lives closer and closer to God's heart he feels more and more confidence. But before we attempt

to explain God's purpose in permitting temptation we must clear up a preliminary difficulty by asking, What exactly is God's part in temptation?

At first sight the Bible seems to contradict itself. Now it speaks of God as permitting temptation, now as actually bringing it about, now as the actual tempter, and then once more it seems indignantly to deny its own words:

'Let no man when he is tempted say, I am tempted of God.'

'God did tempt Abraham.'

'For God tempteth no man.'

'Then was Christ led away by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.'

'Woe to that man by whom occasions of stumbling come.'

'Our Father, lead us not into temptation.'

How are we to reconcile all these?

To solve this problem we must clearly distinguish the forces at work. All temptation consists of two parts, an external stimulus and an internal answer to this stimulus. The external stimulus, if we believe the ordering

of every detail of our life to be of God, we must believe also to be of God. The internal answer is the temptation to which St. James refers when he says, ' Let no man when he is tempted say, I am tempted of God.' Let me illustrate: You are a small boy, low in the school, and you begin the week with all sorts of good resolutions. But on Monday you meet in the play-ground some elder boy who asks you to do wrong, to cheat or to lie or to steal, who talks smut to you, some boy whose company you feel to be a blight. You are in temptation. Who brought you there? There can be no manner of doubt as to the answer. You are being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. This is of God. But what happens then?

Let us trace your history in the play-ground a little farther. As the boy, who, remember, Satan though he is, is still ' God's minister '— as this boy talks to you a third party joins in the conversation, a tiny voice within you, small at first, but oh! so persistent, so insistent! What does it say? ' It does not matter.' ' No one will know.' ' Everybody does it.'

'Be a man; don't be tied to your mother's apron-strings all your life.' 'It's wrong, of course, but it's very easy to get forgiven.' 'It's no use your trying. You tried before, and you had to give in.' 'It had to happen; it was all planned out. You couldn't escape; it wasn't your fault.' This is the internal answer. Is it of God? Solemnly St. James replies, 'Let no man when he is tempted say, I am tempted of God.' The unseen third party in that interview, with the insistent voice, was *not* God!

Now I have nothing to do this evening with what I have called the internal answer. It is not this to which James refers when he says, 'Count it all joy, brothers, when ye fall into manifold temptation.' No man dare thank God that this still, small, evil-answering voice of his lower nature is persistent, and refuses to be silenced even in the Holy of Holies of his life.

What, then, is the purpose of that temptation into which God does day by day lead us? The purpose I take to be threefold:

i. To exercise our moral muscles, and to prevent our becoming morally flabby and nerveless.

ii. To show us our weak points.

iii. To teach us the lesson of our final dependence on the source of all strength.

i. *Temptation is to exercise our moral muscles, and to prevent our becoming morally flaccid and feeble.* Believe me, the really dangerous parts of life are not the moments of battle, but the moments of rest. When, after the battle of Cannae in the Second Punic War, all Italy lay under Hannibal's feet, it was not the Roman power which shattered his forces, but the luxury of Capua in which he pitched his winter quarters. The whole course of the history of the world might have been different had Hannibal not been too comfortable! So it is with you! The moral world you would have built when you planned it out without temptations or hindrance would have been a world of useless weaklings.

> When the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something

It is the trouble, the difficulty, the temptation, that is the making of you. You know how in training your body to yet yourself ' fit ' you have to exercise each muscle again and again, and the proper rule for such exercise is that it should be continued until the muscle just feels tired. God knows that it is so with your soul. If your soul is to be morally ' fit,' each fibre of it must be tried and tested, wellnigh up to the breaking-point. God never goes beyond. We do! Sometimes in our exercises we use the movements improperly; in our heedlessness we carry the strain too far, and the fibre snaps and is permanently weakened. Sometimes, too, in our heedlessness a similar thing happens in the moral exercises which God sets us. We neglect the directions to be ' instant in prayer.' We are proud in our own strength, and strain a muscle too far. We yield, the moral fibre gives, snaps; and though it may heal—and, thank God, generally does heal—yet it is undeniably for all time weaker. The question arises—we cannot help asking it—' Ought God to set us exercises which involve a risk like that? ' We ask it

reverently, but it is a fair question. Well, the answer is that there are risks in everything worth the learning. You try to learn bicycling, and many a tumble and many a bruise awaits you before you become the master of the machine. The same with skating, with gymnastics, with football, with cricket, with every single thing that has to do with the development of the body. Why should it be different with the development of the soul? It is not different. I say it reverently, but none the less confidently, God *cannot* make a perfect Christian without temptation, and God deliberately accepts the risk for the greater gain. The more perfect the Christian, the greater the number of risks through which he has to pass. Had God chosen to do otherwise, His work would have been a machine, not a man. It is only the power to do wrong which makes a virtue of the doing of right. What merit is it in a statue that it remains immovable on its pedestal? Man's glory, in Milton's phrase, is that he is

Able to stand, yet free to fall

that he can say with Shakespeare :

> 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
> Another thing to fall.

You must never forget that you are able to stand, that no temptation which God exposes you to is too strong for you, though some will test your muscles well up to the breaking-point. Remember that each temptation conquered is so much added strength. In Emerson's words, ' Every evil to which we do not succumb is a benefactor. We gain the strength of the temptation we resist.' There used to be a custom among certain savages that when one chief had conquered and killed another in battle he ate his heart, thinking that thereby the strength and courage of the dead man passed into him. It is so inevitably with temptation. Conquer it, and you have eaten its heart, and all your moral muscles are braced the firmer. You have the joy and confidence of conquest, which is half the next battle. You are greater, nobler taller, for your fight.

> Was the trial sore?
> Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!

Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph? Pray
.
O Thou whose servants are the bold,
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,
Reluctant dragons up to who dares fight,
That so he may do battle and have praise.

ii. *Temptation is permitted in order to show us our weak points, and that no weak point can be neglected.* I will treat this part of my subject by a parable. One of the most magnificent tales which the genius of Rudyard Kipling has given to us is entitled *The Ship that Found Herself.* It opens with the christening of the *Dimbula.* The owner's daughter, Miss Frazier, has just given it its name, and is talking with the captain:

'"And now," said Miss Frazier, "she's a real ship, isn't she?"

'"Oh, she's not so bad," the skipper replied cautiously. "But I'm sayin' that it takes more than christenin' to mak' a ship. In the nature of things, Miss Frazier, if ye follow me, she's just iron and rivets and plates put into the form of a ship. She has to find herself yet."

"And how will you do it?" the girl asked.

"We can do no more than drive and steer her, and so forth; but if we have rough weather this trip—it's likely—she'll learn the rest by heart."

And so the ship goes out into the broad Atlantic, and under the stress of the storm every bolt and every beam gets a voice.

'"What's the use?" a few hundred rivets chattered. "We've given—we've given, and the sooner we confess that we can't keep the ship together, and go off our little heads, the better it will be. No rivet forged can stand this strain."

'"No one rivet was ever meant to. Share it among you," the steam answered.

'"The others can have my share. I'm going to pull out," said a rivet in one of the forward plates.

'"If you go, others will follow," hissed the steam. "There's nothing so contagious in a boat as rivets going. Why, I knew a little chap like you—he was an eighth of an inch fatter, though—on a steamer—to be sure, she was only 1,200

tons, now I come to think of it—in exactly the same place as you are. He pulled out in a bit of a bobble of a sea, not half as bad as this, and he started all his friends, and the plates opened like a furnace-door, and I had to climb into the nearest fog-bank while the boat went down."

'"Now, that's peculiarly disgraceful," said the rivet. "Fatter than me, was he, and in a steamer not half our tonnage? Reedy little peg! I blush for the family, sir." He settled himself more firmly than ever in his place, and the steam chuckled.

'"You see," he went on quite gravely, "a rivet, and especially a rivet in your position, is really the one indispensable part of the ship."'

iii. *Temptation is sent to teach us the lesson of our final dependence on Christ, the source of all strength.* If temptation were simply a series of moral exercises in which a failure meant certain loss, then, however great the gain of a success, one might doubt whether God could justifiably expose His children to the risk. Grant that a failure means a will-power

permanently weaker (and this is certainly the case), grant that it leaves scars which nothing can eradicate (and this, too, is certainly the case), and the risk becomes too awful even for Omniscience to face unless there be somewhere some compensation. God has provided such compensation. The lesson which He wants His children to learn when they are weakened and humiliated is a more complete dependence on Christ. Our wills are weakened by the fall! Granted! Then let us learn that 'our wills are ours' only 'to make them' His, that it is possible so to lay hold of Christ that His will-power passes into our lives and becomes ours, mastering our feebler, weakened will and making it His. Oh, boys, Christ is present, is speaking to you as certainly as I am now. Is there no one here who will yield himself and his will to Christ, give himself utterly to Christ, get Christ to face temptation by his side, be Christ's man from this day forth?

A word in conclusion to those who have failed. You commenced the year with such good resolutions. Nothing was to be too hard

for you. You had been beaten before, but you had made up your minds that you would beat this time. Satan should be trodden down under foot and spurned. No army of volunteers leaving for South Africa or France ever set out with brighter spirits, gayer hopes. Your uniforms were new, your rifles were polished, your swords were bright. And now? You have had your Magersfontein or your Mons. In the darkness of the night, when you expected nothing, there was a sudden ring of fire, the foe was upon you. You were stumbling carelessly on, with no thought of danger, and in a moment you found disaster and defeat. And it is an old tale. It has all happened before—the same old story: confidence in the morning sunshine, defeat in the darkness, and, having lost your leader, you have stumbled back blindly, dispirited. What is to be said in such a case? One thing always, certainly:

> 'Tis better to have fought and lost
> Than never to have fought at all.

Try again! Trust in yourself less and in

Christ more. Lose self-confidence, gain Christ-confidence. True courage is shown in the face of defeat. Now that you are baffled, fight better! Determine, God helping you, that you will retrieve this Sedan of your soul. Determine that the new school year shall mean a new start, new victory. Banish 'I can't,' for you know you 'can.' Do not let the first defeat mean the abandonment of effort. Have something of Sir Richard Grenville's spirit in you:

> For he said, 'Fight on! Fight on!'
> Though his ship was all but a wreck.

And then when the long day's work is done and the time comes for you to take your armour off, your place will be with the triumphant who came out of much temptation:

> For he who, though his fights be all defeats,
> Still fights,
> Enters at last
> The heavenly Jerusalem's rejoicing streets
> With glory more and more triumphal rites
> Than always-conquering Joshua's when his blast
> The frighted walls of Jericho down cast;
> And, lo! the glad surprise
> Of peace beyond surmise
> More than in common saints for ever in his eyes.

V

PHAGOCYTES: THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SIN

Sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death.—Jas i. 15.

This letter of James, as I have very recently reminded you, owes no small part of its interest to the fact that the writer is Christ's own brother, and it is fair to assume that much of it is the recollection of Christ's own teaching. We studied together on that occasion its philosophy of temptation, and I pointed out to you that temptation is of two kinds, external and internal. The external temptation is from God; it is God's

> Machinery, just meant
> To give thy soul its bent,
> Try thee, and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed.

For this temptation, with all its chances of trying the soul's muscles, and of making God's

child into God's man, we ought to be thankful: 'Count it all joy, my brothers, when ye fall into manifold temptations'; or, as the modern poet puts the same thought, say to yourself that you are

> Happy that you can
> Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
> Not left in God's contempt apart,
> With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart.

The internal temptation is the answering voice of the soul, that mean whisper which comes you know not whence, and which bids you yield to the wrong, give in to and retreat before the lions on your path—which are all chained, if you only knew it—which apologizes for you, which assures you that no one will know if you do this little wrong thing, that you will be none the worse, that there is always time for repentance. That is the whisper which, whatever its source, is not of God: 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.' Now James, in the passage I have chosen for the text and in the verse preceding, takes up this internal temptation, and traces it out, and makes a summary of what I may call the natural history of sin.

Just look at verses 14 and 15. 'A man is being tempted,' he says, 'when he listens to the voice of his lower nature, as it drags him out of the right path and into a snare' (for that is about the force of the Greek), 'and when the will has surrendered to the lower nature it has already sin in its womb; and when the sin is born, unless it is strangled at birth, its child is death.' 'Sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death.'

I want to-night to study the life-history of sin, and I propose to do it by means of a parable. For just as sin when it is allowed to grow brings death in the moral body, so disease when it is allowed its own course brings death in your physical body; and I am going to try to explain to you a very wonderful theory of disease first suggested about twenty years ago by a distinguished Russian, Metschnikoff, because we shall find that in a strange and interesting way the moral kingdom resembles the physical, and that there is point after point in the life-history of disease which suggests something helpful as regards the life-history of moral disease, i.e. sin. Now if for a little

while I ask you to listen to what may seem rather more like a scientific lecture than a sermon, I want you always to remember that my parable has an application.

I want to talk to you, then, for a few minutes, about what are known as bacteria. These are the lowest and the humblest members of the vegetable kingdom, but the patient work of the last thirty years has shown that they are perhaps the most important. They are inconceivably small, and assume all possible shapes. The largest of them is so small that five thousand of it placed end to end would just take up an inch, and it is about five times as long as it is broad. One of the smallest, the one that does the mischief in what is known as blood-poisoning, is such that if you magnify it a thousand times across it would still be smaller than a very small pin-head. Many of them have got very useful work to do in the world. One species devotes itself to keeping plants alive. By its help the nitrogen of the air which the plant requires for its life is taken and converted into such a form that the plant

can feed on it. Makers of vinegar require the help of another species; makers of cheese still another. Again, we owe the large deposits of bog-iron ore near Westbury and at other places to the activity of a third set, for they take the iron which is dissolved in many springs (as it is in the Bath waters) and throw it down as iron ore for future generations to use, long after its makers have ceased to be. But there are many other species whose sole work seems to be, so far as we know at present, to cause disease in man. Every disease which can be passed from man to man is believed to be due to them, and in quite the majority of such cases it has been already proved that this is so. One species, for instance, makes its home on damp earth. A boy uses his penknife for digging into the ground. As he withdraws it, a few of the bacteria cling to it. He puts his knife away without cleaning it, and a few days after cuts his hand and lets the bacteria into his body. They set up the terrible disease of lockjaw. These bacteria do nothing else but cause this deadly disease of lockjaw, and live nowhere else

save in damp earth. Three distinct species can, any one of them, produce a common cold. No doubt the kind of cold is different in every case, but medicine has not advanced far enough to see the difference. Two at least may give pneumonia, and two others cholera. The universal plague of influenza is due to one, and the terrible diphtheria to another, while the greatest scourge of all, consumption, which in the long-run kills one-seventh of the human race, is due to a third.

Now these bacteria, like sin, which I am taking them to illustrate, are everywhere. You cannot avoid coming into contact with them any more than you can avoid coming into contact with sin ; but you can keep them from injuring you just as you can keep yourselves unspotted from the world. They are everywhere, I say. They are in the air you breathe. Every breath you take draws myriads into your lungs. Many of them live in your mouths, and you cannot help it. Some of them it seems almost impossible to kill. Dry them up into dust, boil them, scorch them, freeze them, and some of

them will live through it all. Let me note in passing, however, that two things kill them rapidly, sunlight and fresh air. There is no disinfectant like sunshine or fresh air. Is it not so, too, with sin? Can your sins live in the sunshine of Christ's presence, or in the fresh air of communion with God?

I want now to follow these bacteria a little farther. I will suppose that some of them have gained a lodging in the blood. What happens then? They grow with inconceivable rapidity. Directly one has doubled in length it splits into two, and you have two perfect living bacteria instead of one. Each grows, doubles and splits, and so on. It takes an hour or less for one individual to become two, in two hours you would have four, in three hours eight, and so on. This means that there would be 17,000,000 in twenty-four hours. But these are living creatures. They feed on the blood, and they cast their waste products into the blood, and thus they poison the system. There is very little trouble at first. The patient does not notice it. But they grow and grow, and the poison grows,

until after a few hours' time in cholera, or a few days in scarlet fever, or a few weeks in other cases, you are in the grip of the disease.

Is there not a parable here? Sin, like the bacteria, is everywhere; but it cannot do you any harm unless it is taken into your system. Usually that is by your own choice. Sir W. Scott draws attention to a 'popular belief respecting evil spirits that they cannot enter an inhabited house unless invited, nay, dragged over the threshold.' In a recent novel which very powerfully presents the old fable of the vampire who lived by sucking the blood of other people, the man who represents incarnate evil comes to meet the stranger upon whose life-blood he is going to feed with the words, '"Welcome to my house! Enter freely, and of your own will." He made no motion' (says the stranger) 'of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold . . . his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince.'

You must choose sin, I say; but it will not usually be the case that the grasp of sin is at first a grasp 'that makes you wince.' As a rule you scarcely notice the poison, but it grows and grows, and you wake up to find that it has a hold upon you that only Christ can loosen. One of your fathers told me a few years ago a tale which I shall never forget. He met one day at dinner a well-known public man. Though he belonged to a teetotal family, he was just recovering from an attack of *delirium tremens*, and he explained the matter to my friend thus: 'I had determined to write an article on the evils of drink, and I felt that I could not do it upon hearsay, but must have first-hand information. I went down among the dossers and dockers, and dressed as they did, or they would not have trusted me, and had to take my pint.' 'I tell you, sir,' he went on, 'I went down into hell; I looked into the pit, I saw the flames; and before I knew where I was the leper-spot was upon me.'

You must *choose* sin; but when you have

chosen its grip gets tighter and tighter until only Christ can loosen it.

To return to our parable, the bacteria, when they have once entered the system, feed upon it, just as an invading army feeds upon the lands it attacks. But fortunately there is a defending army. I have said that these bacteria are everywhere. Most of you, if not all of you, carry about in your mouths the very germ which produces pneumonia. Probably everybody inhales some noxious germ many times in the day. How comes it, then, that you do not all get pneumonia constantly? To explain this I must refer to the wonderful theory of the Russian, Metschnikoff, whom I have named before. If you put a drop of blood under the microscope, you will see that it is really a nearly colourless fluid in which an enormous number of tiny red discs like small coins are floating. It would take about 3,000 of these discs, side by side, to make an inch, and a number of fourteen figures is needed to express the number of them which you have in your body altogether. My parable, however has

nothing to do with these red discs, and I want you to look a little more carefully through your microscope. You will see here and there a colourless disc, rather larger than the red disc, but not so fixed in shape. There is one colourless disc to about every 250 red discs. They have the power of moving about, and can change their shape and act in every way as if they were alive. Their scientific name is phagocyte, a Greek word which means eating-cells ; and they owe this name to the wonderful fact, which Metschnikoff first noticed, that when in their movements about the blood they come across anything that ought not to be there they simply clasp their little bodies round it and eat it up and destroy it. I have a series of twenty-one photographs, taken at intervals of about a quarter of an hour, showing the whole course of the battle between a phagocyte in the blood and a disease-germ. It took three minutes for the eating-cell, the phagocyte, to cast its body round the disease-germ and render it harmless, and about three and a half hours later the germ was broken up into small bits

and destroyed. This is why you are not always catching some disease. The pneumonia germ and others are in your mouth and continually gaining entrance to your blood, but directly they do your defending army rushes at them and annihilates them. There is a mysterious force, to which scientific people give a very long name (*chemiotaxis*), which draws the eating-cells towards any part of the body into which germ-cells have entered. You are secure because your body is constantly patrolled by something like 100,000,000,000 fearless little soldiers. If they win the battle and the invaders are all killed, your health will not suffer. If the invaders win, they throw out earth-works, so to speak, of their own poisonous products, and the eating-cells cannot get near them any more, so that they grow unchecked, and in the body, as in the soul, 'sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death.'

Why do you not always win? As a rule you will win if your defending army is in good condition. But, to take the case of pneumonia for example, you get a chill, by sitting on damp

grass, or in a cold wind, or by some other folly. This 'lowers your vitality,' as it is said, i.e. it makes your little army less active, and perhaps kills some of them, for they only live a few hours, and the germs come upon the point of weakness, and the battle is theirs this time.

There are one or two other points I want to bring out before I pass to apply my parable.

If the germs win the day for the moment, and invade the whole system, whether you die or live will depend on whether your army can rally and conquer or not. When the system is invaded you 'have the disease,' but usually your army will conquer if your strength is kept up. After that there is a period of immunity from that particular disease. Nobody quite knows why this is so, but it is. Perhaps it is not wholly metaphor to suggest that the defending cells which have conquered, and in an hour or so have lived their little life and given place to their children, have endued those children with something of their own skill in fight. The children of the strong are strong.

The army which conquered has sons trained to fight, and when the disease-germs come again they meet the fighting descendants of the old heroes. Anyway, after a victorious battle there is peace for awhile with this foe. But the truce does not last for ever. It may last only for a few hours as in influenza, or for a few weeks as with pneumonia, or for many years as with scarlet-fever and small-pox. But sooner or later the immunity ends.

May I read my parable now? *First*, the only way to keep from sinning is to have Christ's life within you. Do not tell me that you can do it without, for you cannot. A greater than you, one of the greatest men who ever lived, St. Augustine, tried and failed, and he has left in a wonderful book the history of his failure. 'I adjourned,' he says, 'from day to day the life in Thee, but daily death in myself I could not adjourn.' For thirty-three years he battled with himself, unable to give up his pleasures. 'Give me chastity and self-control,' he prayed once, 'but not just yet.' 'Trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities held me back; they caught

hold of the garment of my flesh and whispered in my ear, " Can you let us go, and from that instant this and that will be forbidden to you for ever." ' It was thirty-three years before Augustine gave himself to Christ; but do not forget that every year makes the surrender harder. Dr. Stanley Hall collected a few years ago in America the figures of 6,643 conversions, and found that 6,552 took place before the age of twenty-five, 89 between twenty-five and thirty, 2 after thirty. It is a simple matter of statistics when I tell you that if you leave this school without surrendering, the chances are quite against your ever doing so.

There are some, I know, with whom any such appeal falls flat. They are doing no great harm in the world, and still less good. When you speak of terrific issues which may hang on the choice, they will tell you of the love of God; and their words, in fact, are those of the old Persian poet:

> They talk of some strict testing of us. Pish!
> He is a good fellow, and 'twill all be well

Will it all be well? The same poet who wrote:

No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore,

and

I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care,

wrote also :

For ever round the mercy-seat
The guiding lights of love shall burn ;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn ?

Oh, I beseech you, give yourselves to Christ, admit Christ's life into your heart. It is the only way, I say, to live your life to the best purpose. It is the only safeguard from sin. May I remind you of that metaphor I read in the Second Lesson ; perhaps the most daring metaphor in the Bible—' Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because His seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God ' ? There is a tremendous force in heredity for the children of God !

Next, just as you are immune from disease so long as you keep strong, and so keep your defending army ready, so you remain immune

from sin only so long as the life of Christ courses vigorously through you. Temptations come, but they are brushed aside unfelt. But let your communion with Christ weaken, and sin enters. 'If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door.' You know the pitiful tale—I wonder if it is the tale of any one here?—the vision of God's glory, the rush of enthusiasm with which you donned your armour, the chill of the world upon the enthusiasm, the entry of sin, its victory over you, your humiliation and fall. How did it come? Was it a sneer that made you think that the prayers you said by your bedside might just as well be said inside your bed when the gas was out? Anyway, the chill came; sin seemed less hateful, and you fell. Get the life of Christ within your veins again.

Last, when after a long battle you have conquered the disease-germ, you are immune for awhile. So it is with temptation. Each temptation conquered makes the attack of the rest less vigorous. That is the very object of temptation. But the immunity does not last for ever. There is always danger that a forgotten

temptation will arise and crush you suddenly, and there is no safety for you save in the continual presence of Christ, 'Christ who continually infuseth strength into me.' Thanks be to God, there is always safety there.

VI

'ESPRIT DE CORPS

We who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.—ROM. xii. 5

THE great metaphor of our text, which St. Paul develops most fully in the chapter which I read for our Second Lesson, picturing individual members of a community as parts of one body, no more able to live separate lives than the hand and the foot, is a metaphor as old as the hills. It is enshrined for ever in our language in the word 'member,' which, as you know, is the Latin *membrum*, and means a 'limb,' so that a 'member of a society' is properly a limb of the society which is pictured as a body. Paul did not invent it. Perhaps he met with it first in his reading of Roman History, for we may well imagine that one so proud of his inherited Roman citizenship would study eagerly

the brilliant Roman History of Livy which had been published a few years before his student days at Tarsus. There he would find the tale of how in the struggles between the Senate and the people, about five hundred years before Christ, which ended in the appointment of the Tribunes of the People, Menenius Agrippa, a member of a deputation appointed by the Senate to talk the people into reason, delivered as his speech, in his own 'bluff, old-fashioned style,' as Livy says, a fable which he left to interpret itself, the fable of 'The Belly and the Members,' wherein the various members of the body are pictured as complaining that the stomach at the centre of things sat still and enjoyed itself, doing nothing for its living, while they had to do all the work; so that finally they rise in insurrection, and the hands determine to bring no food to the mouth, the mouth to receive none, the teeth to be idle in their sockets, the feet not to walk a step in search; and, of course, the end of all this attempt to make the stomach work for its own living is that the entire body decays and perishes. You will find the

fable in full in Shakespeare, for the Greek historian Plutarch, who wrote a few years after Paul's death, tells it again, and Shakespeare takes it almost word for word from the translation of Plutarch which he used, and tells it again in the first scene of his play *Coriolanus*, which is full of it. Or it may be, though it is not likely, that some collection of fables under the name of Aesop was in existence in Paul's day, and that he read it there. But the tale itself was at least a thousand years old when Menenius Agrippa used it, for it has recently been traced back to Egypt.

Whatever its origin, Paul takes this fable, the magic of his touch passes over it, and it becomes a parable. It grows upon him as he grows older. He uses it only once in Romans, and three times in 1 Corinthians, but much oftener in the later Epistles. Here he pictures Christians as members of one body in Christ, and Christ is the life that animates the whole, the heart of the body—nay, in one striking verse Christ is the whole : 1 Cor. xii. 12, ' For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all

the members of the body, being many, are one body, so is Christ.' The thought here is the thought which our First Lesson presented under another image: 'I am the Vine, and ye are the branches.' In later life Paul altered his figure a little, and in the Epistle to the Colossians, where he uses it five times, and in that to the Ephesians, where it occurs eight times and forms almost the key-note, Christ is pictured as the Head of the body: Eph. iv. 16, 'From whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.'

Now I want to take this great metaphor of Paul's and apply it to our common life here, to the life of the school which we all of us love: 'We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.' Of the applications of the text which crowd upon one I will choose three:

i. Among the many lessons which you are sent to school to learn, one of the most

important is that which is conveyed by the well-known French phrase, so hard to put into concise English, *esprit de corps*, loyalty to the corporate body to which you belong.

ii. Disloyalty to that body means and involves disloyalty to the Head of the body, Christ Himself.

iii. Christ is the Head of this school, which is His.

i. *Esprit de corps*, or loyalty, is, after all, a development of the idea of friendship. There was a letter in the *Spectator* a few years ago (November 20, 1909) which well illustrated in a fierce elemental way the spirit that lies at the bottom of it. 'A few years ago,' says the writer, 'I met a miner in the West Australian goldfields. . . . He and his mate had sunk a shaft. His mate placed a dynamite charge in the bottom of the shaft, lit the slow match, and then climbed up the ladder to get out of danger. When he had got nearly to the top he fell and broke his leg,' and there he lay helpless, watching the red spark hissing along the

fuse with death in wait at the end. 'His mate went down and carried him out while the slow match was burning. He got him to the top with about a second to spare before the dynamite exploded. . . . I met this hero whilst I was talking with a friend, a prominent member of the Legislative Council. My friend said, "I hope I shall be able to get you the Albert Medal." The reply was, "I don't want your wretched[1] medal. He was my mate!"' That is *esprit de corps* in its most elementary form. Loyalty, self-effacement, even unto death: 'I don't want your wretched medal. He was my mate!'

In its highest form *esprit de corps* is known as patriotism. A few years ago we had in the Russo-Japanese War such illustrations of what patriotism is and means as the world had never seen before. When the little island kingdom set itself to fight the imperial strength of Russia, there was no man in it unprepared to sacrifice himself. A criminal under sentence of death for murder had a few shillings sent him by

[1] A much more forcible adjective stands in the original.

friends that he might live his last days in greater comfort. He sent the money to the war fund. There was that captain who, seeing his men driven back during one of the attacks on a Russian trench, determined to sacrifice himself to obtain victory for his side. He tied as many hand-grenades about him as he could conveniently carry, and one of his men lit all the fuses simultaneously. The captain then hurled himself on the enemy. The grenades, bursting together in the Russian trench, inflicted terrible execution. The position was taken. There was that widow whose only son refrained from volunteering in the army because he was her sole support. She committed suicide that she might set him free. There was that common stoker who gave his life in the bitterly cold night when the first attack on Port Arthur was made during a snowstorm. The escape-valve of one of the torpedo-boats had become clogged with ice, and there being no other way to clear it he dropped overboard and cleared the valve with his own hands. Himself numbed and drowned in the icy sea, he had saved his ship. A pension

was offered to his parents by the Government; but the father refused it, saying that it was quite sufficient privilege to have been allowed to offer up his son in the service of his country.

That is what patriotism means! One's own comfort, one's own interests, one's own life even, a small and trifling thing to help on the great body to which you belong. 'None for himself, but all for the school'; every boy in the school more anxious to be helpful than to be successful, the best way, after all, of winning any true success in the world.

Let me refer for a moment or two to one of the great forces in a school which work towards this end, a force which does its work the more surely because, for the most part, those on whom it works are unable to feel its tendency,—the school games. It may startle some of you to hear me talk about the moral value of cricket and football, but the phrase is not too strong. But, mind you, there is no moral gain in spending your time in saturating your mind with averages, or in joining a drunken crowd at a North of England football

match. The moral gain comes when you play yourself, but not for yourself; when you learn that any little success you win is of value not to yourself, but to your side; when you venerate more the boy who can pass the ball than the boy who makes a brilliant run down the field, or the boy who can time his strokes in cricket, if he is not a great batsman, so that his partner gets most of the bowling. In the biography of one of the greatest head masters of last century, Almond of Loretto, there is an interesting passage where he arranges games in order of moral merit. I will not quote the arrangement, because some of you might be troubled to find how low in the list your own favourite pastime stands. But I should like to read you a little of what he says: 'In athletics proper the danger of selfishness comes in very strongly. Consequently I have never allowed any competition for prizes among my boys. Cricket is not a selfish game as long as averages are kept in the background and a boy cares more for his school winning than for his own personal success. Football is much

less selfish. Eight-oar rowing is the least selfish of all the great sports.'

Remember, then, that one great reason (not the only one) why we recognize school games as a valued part of our common life is that games foster the *esprit de corps*, the patriotism, the loyalty of our school life. It is also true that *esprit de corps* leads to success in games. I remember reading a few years ago in *The Times* a criticism of the cricket year then closed, and was much struck with the reasons which the writer assigned for the success of Kent. This was not put down to the brilliant batting of Mr. Hutchings, but mainly to the fact that the team were possessed one and all with that *esprit de corps* which an eleven of born-and-bred county players must possess to a greater degree than counties like Middlesex, Surrey, Lancashire, and others, crowded with mercenaries gathered from all over the Empire.

There is a great deal more to be said about all that *esprit de corps* means. I can only hint at it. It means hard work, for idleness injures

a form, and an idle form is a cancer in a school. It means obedience, for there is no mark-list *habitué* so stupid as not to know that the rules of a school are, to the best of our power, laid down for the good of the school, and that if he breaks the rules, however remotely the chain of consequences may stretch, he is injuring not himself only, but the school as a whole. It means not blindness to the school faults, but silence, at all events, about them outside the school. I remember reading somewhere that you could tell the moral worth of a man by listening to what he said about his mother. I am quite sure that you can tell the moral worth of a man by listening to what he says about his *alma mater*. There is a tale in Almond's life which illustrates my meaning: '"Long after my own departure from Loretto," writes Mr. Henry Johnstone, "I met a young Loretto boy one day on the Dean Bridge. I asked him how the Head was. 'Quite well,' he told me. 'Has he been doing anything odd lately?' said I. 'Odd! What do you mean?' asked the boy angrily. 'Doesn't he

sometimes do odd things?' I asked. 'Certainly not,' said the boy. 'Well,' said I, 'when I was at Loretto——' 'Oh,' he said, 'if you were at Loretto I'll tell you what he did yesterday,' and he told me."' Forget the details of this tale, but remember the moral. Loyalty means a keen eye for the faults of the school, that you may remedy them; but a silent tongue for outsiders, lest you should injure the body one of whose members you are.

I think, too, that it is often forgotten that *esprit de corps* involves a sensitivity to the wrong-doing of members of the corporate body not always seen when it should be. If any part of our human body is severely injured, the nerve-shock runs on its tiny wires into every other part of the system. A father whose son is proved a thief finds it hard to hold up his head again. Do we feel the nerve-shocks of the misdoings of others as we should? Colonel Younghusband, in *The Story of the Guides*, gives a splendid illustration of what I mean. While a corps of Afridis was stationed in the Khaibar Pass just before the Afghan

War one young Afridi bolted with two rifles. The commanding officer paraded the rest of the men of that particular section of the Afridis serving in the regiment, seventeen in all, and ordered them to be stripped of their uniform and equipment. Then he said, 'Don't let me see your faces again until you bring back those two rifles.' The Afghan War followed, two years passed away, and the incident had been almost forgotten, when one day seventeen ragged men, carrying two rifles, trooped into Marda. Their spokesman said, 'The sahib told us never to show our faces again until we found the rifles, and here they are. Now by your honour's kindness we will again enlist and serve the Queen.' Is not that great? Pray God that we may have a little of that spirit here.

Secondly, *disloyalty to the body, lack of esprit de corps, means and is disloyalty to the Head of the body, Christ Himself.* Now in this word 'disloyalty' I wish to include what I will call false loyalty; and by this phrase 'false loyalty' I want to convey obedience to a code of honour

which you know in your heart of hearts to be rotten, but which you happen to find in the part of the school in which you are placed. I wish I could do or say something to bring home to you the incredible meanness and littleness of what in some parts of any school passes as honour. A master asks, 'Were you talking?' You were, but you unblushingly answer, 'No.' A lie? Oh dear no; for at the moment when he began to speak you were silent to listen to him, and so, of course, you were not talking then. The same boy, if asked, 'Have you been talking during the last minute?' would certainly have answered, 'Yes.' Oh, you new boys, there are some of you, I doubt not, as pure as crystal now. I beseech you do not be corrupted by such devil's doctrine of schoolboy honour as that. Do not be led into little acts of theft because the others tell you, 'It isn't stealing; everybody does it.' Try your code of honour by the standard of loyalty to Christ.

There is another point about which I wish to say a little in this connection, and that is in

regard to the code which successive generations of schoolboys have established amongst themselves, of which the chief item is that the one unpardonable sin for a schoolboy to commit is to 'tell' about another boy. Now I recognize two things about this doctrine; and the first is that any direct effort on my part to modify it is absolutely vain, and that the most that I can do is to lay down certain general principles which, if I can succeed in convincing you about them, will lead to your modifying it. The second is that the fundamental idea of the doctrine is a sound and healthy one, and that it is, in effect, a realization, crude and barbaric certainly, but in the main honest, of the doctrine of the text that 'we are one body, severally members of one another.' Where it fails is in its too frequent forgetfulness of one clause of the text, 'one body in Christ.' I want to ask you to forget for a moment that I am a master, and to ask yourselves before Christ this question: 'Is one boy *ever* justified in "telling" of another boy?' I have no doubt at all about the answer. 'If a boy sees

another boy doing moral wrong, it is his absolute duty either to stop him, or, if he cannot do that, to tell somebody who can.' I say 'moral wrong,' because I want to be quite fair, and I am quite prepared to admit that there are breaches of school discipline, not involving 'moral wrong,' though never to be deliberately perpetrated by Christ's followers, which it is not your duty either to stop or to report, and to report which will deservedly earn you the title of 'sneak.' It is a dangerous doctrine, I know, but I will give an illustration from the outside world which will show what I mean. If you meet a man riding a bicycle without a lamp two hours after sunset, I do not think that it is your duty either to stop him or to report him. There are police for that. There are similar cases in our school life. On the other hand, if you see that bicyclist wilfully run over a child, or see a man injuring a woman or picking somebody else's pocket, it is your duty to try to stop him even in the best policed city in Europe, and, if you cannot do it, to get some one to help. There

are similar cases to that in our school life. Let me take a case or two for consideration.

You are a new boy, and you are bullied. May you tell? Well, I think you should not, and I think you ought always to be very careful about 'telling' when it is to your own advantage to do so. Bear it bravely, and you will be all the better for it, though your bully will be all the worse. It will not last long, for sooner or later somebody else will see it. But another question arises. You see a new boy being bullied; what must you do? There can be no doubt about it. If you can, stop it; and remember that if you seem to fail, and get knocked about yourself for your pains, in nine cases out of ten you have really succeeded, and made more impression than you think. If not, your duty to the body corporate, to which this disgraceful limb of the body belongs, is to tell some one who can stop it, an upper boy or a prefect, by preference. Have no mercy on the bully! I have said that the boy who is bullied is often the better for it, but that is simply because Satan is often unwillingly God's

minister for good. Have no mercy upon Satan, nevertheless. A bully is a detestable coward whom no code of schoolboy honour ought to shield.

You see a boy cheating ; what are you to do ? I think your course is clear. Warn the boy that you have seen him, and that if he does it again you will report the matter to the master. Give him a chance, for it may be a solitary slip. The cheat is doing a wrong to himself, and detection is the best thing that could happen to him. He is doing a wrong to the body corporate ; why should your code protect him ? You may earn a few cheap sneers, and the scorn of those whose praise were an insult.

> Scorn'd—to be scorn'd by one that I scorn
> Is that a matter to make me fret ?
> That a calamity hard to be borne ?

A boy comes to tempt you to do that about which you dare not tell your mother, to do that doing which you dare not face your sister ; what are you to do ? Here again I have no doubt of the answer. You must lay the whole case at once before a master. You must not

even warn the offender. The offence does not admit of a warning. It will be repeated, but not with you. Why should you warn him? You do not politely warn a snake before you kill it. Why should you warn this moral snake? You do not warn a murderer that if he repeats his offence you will really have to mention the matter to the police. Why should you warn one whom you have found stealthily, in the darkness, murdering the purity of your own soul or another's? Once led to wrong, that boy is stained for ever, and has lost that which Christ Himself cannot replace. 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten that hand.' Do not attempt to deal with this sort of crime yourselves. I could name to you half a dozen boys who have left this school in shame and dishonour because I knew of this thing too late; and I could name a dozen at least who have left in honour because I knew in time and could help them to live their sin down, and master it before it mastered them. Let no feeling of false loyalty to the body corporate hold you back. 'If thy right hand

causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee.'

Lastly, and in a word or two, *Christ is the Head of this school, which is His.* Christ is the Head Master. He is the final court of appeal. He must fix your standards of right and wrong, of purity and honour. The final rewards will be from His hand, the final penalties of His inflicting. You lower boys, I beg you take your code of schoolboy ethics to Christ before you apply it. Acknowledge His Headship. Give Him the chance of stamping His personality upon you and thence on the school. You upper boys, you makers of the school, you who set the tone for the years that are coming, be loyal to Christ. I beseech you be loyal to Christ. I appeal to you all. This first Sunday of a new term is full of momentous possibilities. The air is quivering with decisions. More than at other times the choice of roads has to be made.

To every boy there openeth
A way and ways and a way,
And the High Soul climbs the high way.

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> And the Low Soul gropes the low;
> And in between on the misty flats
> The rest drift to and fro

Which way will you take? The High Way with Christ, the Low Way to death, or the fatal to-and-fro drift 'in between on the misty flats'? God give you grace to choose the right way, straight way, and true way.

VII

OPPORTUNITY

Redeeming the time.—EPH. v. 16.

'REDEEMING the time,' or, as you will read in the margin of your Revised Version, 'Buying up the opportunity'—every word in the text is a sermon in itself.

'Redeeming.' The Greek word used here is one which St. Paul alone employs in the New Testament. It means, literally, 'Buying out' or 'Buying up.' In the first sense Paul uses it twice in the Epistle to the Galatians of the action of Christ in, as he puts it, buying man out from the penalty of the law. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,' has paid the price necessary to buy us out from the clutches of the law; and again, 'To redeem them that were under the law.' It is possible

perhaps, that there is a touch of this meaning here; and that we are told to ' buy out ' opportunity from the tyranny of circumstances which tend to waste it, to recognize that all the tendencies of life, of the sluggish nature we inherit and often pamper and foster, are the ruin of opportunity, and to spend all that we have, to spend and be spent, in buying out opportunity from under this curse. But such an interpretation is perhaps a little far-fetched, and most critics are agreed that the ' buying out ' must be interpreted in another sense. You know how in business, when big clearance sales are on, from time to time an article appears in the catalogue as ' sold out ' ; the whole stock is gone, and there is absolutely no more to be obtained. This sense of the phrase ' buy out ' is the one which Paul seems to have in his mind. We may imagine him as picturing Life, the great Tradesman, with a stock of opportunity on sale in his catalogue, and as urging us to buy up the whole lot. ' Buy Life,' he says, ' *out* of the opportunity it offers. *Buy it all.* Do not let any remnant of

opportunity remain on Life's bargain-counter. Buy every scrap of it.'

With equal fidelity to Paul's meaning, we may change the metaphor. Those of you who read the newspapers will have read from time to time how some big firm succeeds in buying all the stock which the world produces of a certain object. They are then said to create a 'corner' in the object in question. Thus a few years ago Leiter, and more recently Patten, of Chicago, both succeeded for awhile in making a 'corner' in wheat, and with all the wheat supply of the world in their hands were able to fix the price almost as high as they wished. For many years past the great De Beers Company has had control of all the diamonds in the world. Thus, again, the Russian Government have in the mines in the Ural Mountains the practical control of the metal platinum. They have a perpetual 'corner' in platinum, just as for many years, at all events, the Rothschild family were said to have in quicksilver, and the Rockefellers certainly had in petroleum. We may

import this idea, purified from all its lower associations, into our text, and imagine Paul saying, in the commercial language of to-day, 'Make a "corner" in opportunity. Buy up all there is on the market. Let no opportunities go begging for a purchaser. Let no man have any of the opportunity which ought to be yours. And then, when you have got the opportunity, use it all to the best advantage, and get the highest value for it that you can.'

'Opportunity.' The English word is a parable. Literally, perhaps, it means 'something which faces you at the harbour,' and it seems to convey a whole picture in itself. Your ship is ready for its voyage; it is leaving the harbour with all sails set and colours flying. The harbour you may think of as the home-days where you made ready for school, or the school-days where you make ready for life, and in which, almost as much as in the home-days, and to a far greater extent than you think, you are sheltered from the rough weather of life, and fail to realize the perils of the high seas that lie beyond, and the winds

that await you. Then, as your ship clears the harbour's mouth, or, maybe, a little later, the op-portu-nity meets you, faces you, blocks the way. The opportunity may be the high tide 'which leads on to fortune,' or may be some new sailing orders from the owner of the vessel, God Himself; but whatever it is, one thing is certain, that it is always there if the captain of the ship has eyes to see it.

'Redeeming the time, buying up the opportunity' thus means, 'Buying up every smallest fraction of the chances of the highest kinds of success which meet you, and are bound to meet you, at the outset of life.' When Paul first wrote these words, in the Epistle to the Colossians—for they occur in exactly the same shape in Col. iv. 5—no doubt he had a very special kind of opportunity in his mind, the opportunity of spreading Christ's kingdom. If you will turn to the passage I have named (Col. iv. 5), you will see that the 'opportunity' of which he is thinking is that of the right time in which to say the right word. 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, buying up the opportunity,'

and he goes on to show that he means, 'Be a gentleman in your Christian work as much as in other relations. Use tact.' There is a right season and a wrong in speaking for Christ. But when Paul comes to expand the ideas of the Colossian letter a little later in writing to the Ephesians, you see that, while this thought is certainly present, there is a wider outlook for his words. He has in mind all the opportunities of life in all its possible relations, its relations of church work, the duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of servants to masters, and of man in his great fight with circumstances and sin, with an invisible host arrayed against him, to withstand which the whole armour of God is needed.

We shall be but slightly widening Paul's meaning if we take the word 'opportunity' in its broadest sense, remembering that what we call our secular work in life is as much work done for God, if rightly viewed, as if we spent our whole time in preaching.

I have spoken in figurative language of Life as a tradesman with a stock of opportunity

to sell. Shall we carry on the figure in the arrangement of our thought this evening, and consider :

i. Life is like an Eastern tradesman. He makes no effort to press his wares upon us.

ii. If we pass them by he will never offer the same again.

iii. We need help to enable us to buy wisely, to know what is opportunity, and what is not.

Or, in other language, still keeping the same metaphor :

i. You may take the goods Life has on offer, or leave them.

ii. You must take them now, or leave them for ever.

iii. Only Christ can show you what you ought to take.

First, then, *Life makes no effort to press his wares upon us.* As you walk down the streets of an Eastern city there is one thing that will strike you immediately about the shops, and that is the complete indifference of the seller as to whether you buy or not. See him

sitting there, cross-legged, at the back of his shop, smoking or gossiping with a neighbour. There are no such things as shop-windows, no advertisement, no display; but in the open space which serves for window a few rolls of goods may be carelessly shown, only you may be certain that the best of the goods are probably hidden away in a garret, hard to find. You pause to look in. The proprietor displays no interest in your proceedings. He goes on smoking or chatting. If you pass by, he will make no effort to stop you. Life is like that. Its opportunities are there, if you could only see them, though perhaps the best of them are hidden away in some garret, and need finding. I would have those of you who with the new term are beginning to face afresh the problem of life, to face it in earnest for the first time, perhaps, to remember two points of my parable: (*a*) Life is an unwilling seller of opportunities. Circumstances are against you, and you have got to master them. (*b*) The best opportunities are often in the least likely places. A word or two on these points.

Life is an unwilling seller of opportunity. No one will put opportunity in your hands, and point out all its merits. It will be there, before you, but you have to stretch out your hands to take it, or even to wrest your bargain away from the seller, who is himself supremely indifferent whether you take or leave it, or, on the whole, seems to prefer to keep it himself. If you miss your chances, and, in the sad colloquialism, 'go under,' the world will go grinding on as if you had never been.

In the Boer War a soldier got separated from his main company, and was attacked and mortally wounded by a party of the enemy. When his company discovered him to be missing, they sent back to look for him, and found him dead. But what touched them more than anything else was this. The dying man had removed his haversack, taken out a pocket-set of chessmen which he carried, selected a pawn, and placed it on the top of the haversack for others to see when they found him. He was only a pawn in a great game which others were playing. Only a pawn,

and he had missed his move. But do not let any feeling of the inevitableness of things and the hostility of circumstances cripple your action. The pawn in life's game may always fight its way up to the last row of squares and become a queen. Circumstances are hostile because God made them so in order that He might call out the fighting spirit in you, and therewith all that is good. God made His mountains high that men might climb them, even if they risk their lives in the climbing. When a boy has spent the year at the top of one form, I generally try to start him next year at the bottom of a much higher form that he may have troubles to meet and difficulties to conquer, not live all his days in ease. When I spoke to you once last term I reminded you how few of the great deeds of life have been done by those who found everything in their favour. The man born with a silver spoon in his mouth is probably choked by it sooner or later. The men the world remembers have had to struggle, and it is their struggles largely which have made them men. Bear in mind that your struggles

may themselves be your opportunities. I remember my father saying to me once, as doubtless yours have said to you, 'My boy, what would I not have been if I had had your chances in life!' I think I answered him rightly when I said, 'Not half the man you are!'

The best opportunities are often in the least likely places. You never know when the great chance of your life will come. When the governor of a certain turbulent Roman province was hurried from his couch one March morning to face a Jewish mob and to pronounce sentence upon an obscure peasant whose name he had probably never heard before, he little dreamt that the crisis of his life was upon him. He might have frustrated the Eternal Plan! He missed his opportunity, and his name is handed down to history with the daily execration of the words, 'Crucified under Pontius Pilate.' So it may be with you. One day, sooner or later, the great opportunity of your life will come. Nothing will mark that day beforehand. The previous day will have been a quite common

and even commonplace day of four-and-twenty hours. But sooner or later it will come, and before that day closes you will have taken your choice or you will have made the 'great refusal,' maybe have crucified your Lord afresh.

And as it is with the greater, so also is it with the smaller opportunities of life. They lurk where you do not expect them. No day passes but you meet them. Do you want to know where in this tiny world of ours your chances come? Everywhere. You see a boy being bullied, and you pass by, like the Levite, on the other side. That Levite, when he set out in the morning to walk to Jericho, thought he had a twenty-mile walk before him, with no incident of any note likely to befall him. He did not guess that he would end that walk morally poorer than he began it. So do you if you pass by the chance God gives you of proving yourself a man. 'But the bully is a bigger boy, and my interference would do no good.' Oh, yes, it would! It would do good to you to begin with, especially if you got soundly thrashed for your

interference, for you would then know something of the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. Is that nothing? It would do immense good to the victim, for he would feel himself no longer alone, and it is the loneliness in persecution that is usually the feature hardest to bear. It might do good to the bully, and force him into a little self-shame, for even to bullies, the most God-forsaken members of our little world, God does sometimes send shame and therewith salvation. But, indeed, the opportunities of our life here are endless, That is only one. Here is another. Your master leaves the room for a moment. The others are idling and talking. Why should not you do the same? If you do not, they will call you by I know not what names. They are certainly more likely to call you a sneak than a saint. They will think you are cheating, taking an unfair advantage of them. Well, why not talk? What harm does talking do, just for a moment? This, chiefly —that knowing, as at the bottom of your heart you do, that work is a duty at times

just as much as play is a duty at other times, you deliberately shut your heart to that knowledge. I say nothing, for the moment, of wasted time. That is the least of your losses. The greatest is the dulling of your sense of duty and responsibility. Further, you lose the chance of setting a good example. Do you suppose that there would be no one there who would feel the better and the stronger if he saw you with head between your hands deliberately determined to be master of your circumstances and to do your duty?

ii. *If we pass opportunity by, Life does not generally offer it again. You must take it now, or leave it for ever.* I could spend hours if I were to read you all the letters I have received from old boys lamenting lost opportunity. 'What a fool I was to waste my time at Kingswood School that way!' says one. 'Oh to have that last year again!' says another. 'You must know that I would do anything to have those years back again.' These are actual sentences from letters I have had in the last few years. The tragedy of waste time is played daily, and

the pity of it is that the players usually think it a comedy. Some years since a boy, one of whose brothers is now following the same course, said to me, 'I have fooled away so much time that I can't work now.' 'Fooled away so much time'—there's the comedy, the big game you play with your masters. 'I can't work now'—there's the tragedy. I wish I could say something which should make this matter of the sacredness of time *bite*. Some sad lines of Lord Dufferin's have been running in my mind:

> So much to do, so little done,
> Our thread of life a third part spun
> And yet its labours scarce begun,
> While stealing downwards, sun by sun,
> The empty years in silence run
> To darkness and oblivion.

Shall I come nearer to you if, for a moment, in all sincerity I refer to myself? My life is more than half done, and I confess that sometimes I am overwhelmed with a sense of lost opportunities. 'The petty Done, the vast Undone' of life crushes me. So much that I had hoped to do not yet begun, and there is

left me only the consolation that in part a man is judged by his hopes. So many chances of doing good thrown away! To name one only, I am conscious that there are some whom I can help by speaking from this pulpit, yet for fourteen years I resisted the call to do this because I was too much of a coward, afraid of breaking down and compromising my dignity, ready enough with all sorts of excuses about having other work to do, and knowing, I think, all the while that they were excuses. I was a coward and shrank back, an idler when God had work for me to do. I see now that this was God's opportunity for me; but the generation that I might have helped has passed away, and I cannot do it now.

> Ah! the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
> To hogs, time's opportunity we made
> So light of, only recognized when flown.

Oh the vastness of the work that the meanest of you has to do in life! In your bodies you have to build up a temple fit for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. In your minds you have to

prepare that which shall not wholly misunderstand the thoughts of God. Dare you be idle now with that majestic programme before you? Oh the tragedy of lost opportunity! They say that hell is paved with good intentions. I tell you that the very stones of its walls are lost opportunities. Perhaps hell itself is but the realization of chances missed, of the might-have-beens of life. That, in truth, would be a 'worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched.' An old tale tells that as the three kings from the East journeyed to Bethlehem under the guidance of the star, they paused one night at the house of a woman. Telling her who they were and whom they sought, they begged her to accompany them. She replied that there was some household work to be done, and that she would join them as soon as she could. Hurrying through the meaner tasks, she set out on her journey, but, alas, when she left her home the kings were already far ahead, out of sight upon the road, and there was no star. And so, the legend runs, she is condemned to wander for ever over

the barren hills of Palestine, starless, because she would not follow the star.

iii. *Only Christ can show you when your opportunity is upon you.* There will be no bad bargains if you take Christ with you into Life's market of opportunity, no gold that proves itself gilt under the stress of wear. May I, in Christ's stead, plead with you to accept His guidance in the great choices which life will be constantly furnishing? As you cross the American continent by the Canadian Pacific Railway, climbing the Rocky Mountains slowly by many a devious curve, there comes a moment when you will see by the side of your train a big board with these words painted upon it, 'The Great Divide.' Just near that board there are two tiny streams; one finds its way by the Fraser River into the sunny Pacific; the other by the Saskatchewan River into the big lakes and thence to Hudson's Bay and the Atlantic. The beginning of a term is always a Great Divide in a boy's life. It is a matter of a step or two which settles whether the stream of his life is to find its way into the ocean of the

Peace of God, or into the fogs and the snows and the outer darkness. Choose Christ now. Let Him sit by your side when you are working in the schoolroom. Your service to your masters will then be not 'eye-service as of men-pleasers,' such miserable and worthless service as is only rendered when the master's eye is upon you. As soon as you realize that, in Paul's splendid phrase, 'it is the Lord Christ whose slaves ye are,' that your masters, whether here or in the wide world, are but His deputies, there will come into your life a new enthusiasm. You will see at once what the tasks are that your great Taskmaster sets you. You will not dread the oncoming of the night when no man can work; and when it comes, and you have to lay all your tasks down, to unbuckle your armour, and rest awhile until the next world's work is assigned to you, you will be as one who

> Wraps rest round him like a robe of triumph,
> And lies down lordlier than he rose

VIII

LAODICEA

I would thou wert cold or hot.—REV. iii. 15.

THERE is scarcely a word in this letter to Laodicea which does not hide an allusion to something connected with local history. The city of Laodicea was the richest trading city in that part of Asia Minor. Cicero names it as a place where on his travels he could cash the letter of credit which he carried. In A.D. 60, a few years before John wrote, an earthquake had laid it in ruins. Tacitus, the Roman historian, describes the earthquake, and adds the interesting information that when Rome offered to send the city a grant to aid in rebuilding, Laodicea refused the grant, saying that she preferred to rely upon her own resources, One can scarcely doubt that this is alluded to.

Turn to verse 17, 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing.' Success had brought its own most frequent penalty of spiritual blindness: 'Thou knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked.' 'Blind'—but the medical school of Laodicea was known over all the Greek-speaking world, and a contemporary physician, Galen, speaks of the small cylinders of ointment which were prepared there, and nowhere else, for diseases of the eye. What irony is here! The great home for the treatment of eye-diseases and the mistress of the home blind herself. 'I counsel thee to buy of me eye-salve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see.' 'The wretched one and miserable, poor and naked.' 'Poor' the home of the bankers! 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire that thou mayest become rich'—real gold, the gold of hard-won character and Christian endurance. 'Naked'—why, Laodicea was known over all Asia for its wool, 'soft in texture and glossy black in colour.' 'I counsel thee to

buy of me *white* garments that thou mayest clothe thyself.' Lastly, in the very words of our text there is probably another local allusion. Across the valley, a few miles away, at Hierapolis, there are hot springs which lose their heat as they flow, until in a vertical cliff just opposite Laodicea they tumble over into the valley, leaving behind them as they evaporate a gleaming white deposit which, like the famous terraces in New Zealand, 'glisten on the mountain-side like foaming cataracts frozen in the fall.' This lukewarm water, which flows near Laodicea neither hot as when it gushed from the earth, nor cool as in the springs so welcome in a thirsty land, supplies the metaphor of the text. It is not cool and refreshing, nor hot and stimulant; it is simply nauseating. 'I know that thou art neither cold nor hot. I will vomit thee out of My mouth.'

The symptoms of the Laodicean spirit are everywhere around us,[1] and you will see them when you go out into the world in many of the

[1] Needless to say this was written before the Great War.

young men you meet, and with whom you will be forced to associate. The Laodiceans clearly prided themselves on their wealth and their clothes, and cared little that their souls were naked. The average young man of to-day is, above all things, anxious about the set of his tie or the crease of his trousers or the shine of his boots. He spends his life in deifying the unimportant. As was once bitterly said, 'He devotes such time as he can spare from the adornment of his person to the neglect of his duties.' I do not want to be misunderstood here, or that any one should say that I advocate slovenliness. A sloven in personal appearance is often, perhaps usually, a sloven in soul. But a fop is always a fool. I want untidiness to hurt you and repel you, but I want it to hurt you in everything; and I want it to hurt you in your work a good deal more than it hurts you in your boots.

The *Daily Mail*, a newspaper which no one could possibly suspect of any hankering after scriptural righteousness, drew attention some years ago to another aspect of the

Laodicean spirit when it published a letter from a correspondent headed 'The Vulgarity of Keenness.' 'Go wherever you will,' said the writer, 'or among whatever classes of Englishmen you please, you see no keenness or ambition. Among the so-called "smart" people it is considered positively vulgar to be keen.'

There may be a little exaggeration here, but can any one deny that there is a lamentable absence of keenness abroad to-day? Where is the temper of a John Wesley, who, in the words of his latest biographer, was always 'a man in haste, great duties behind him just discharged, great duties beckoning him in front'; whose 'moments were measured out as an anxious chemist weighs out his drugs, and assigned —as if in scruples and drachms—to various duties'; who 'lived' always 'in the spirit of Andrew Marvell's strong lines:

> 'Ever at my back I hear
> Time's winged chariots drawing near';

who 'once, when tempted to linger in a lovely landscape,' breaks himself off from what must

have been a great delight with the words, 'I believe there is an eternity; I must arise and go hence'? The fact is that eternity was to Wesley the ever-present reality that coloured all his views of time. 'My lord,' he writes to the Bishop of Exeter, 'it cannot be long before we shall both drop this house of earth and stand naked before God. No, nor before we shall see the great white throne coming down from heaven and Him that sitteth thereon.' And it is this insistent pressure of eternity that makes him write at the very beginning of his career, 'Leisure and I have shaken hands' and parted. This is the secret of the work he accomplished. Under the spur of eternity a man rides fast. A great Dutch scholar of the Middle Ages (Grotius) took as his motto '*Hora ruit*' ('Time is hurrying'). This was, in effect, Wesley's motto too, and it explains how it was possible for him to ride on an average twelve miles and to preach on an average twice or more for every day of fifty years. At the end of his life,

> 'Now, master, take a little rest.' Not he.

Eighty-eight years old, and within a week or two of his death, he is mapping out new worlds to conquer: 'On Wednesday, March 17, I purpose, if God permit, to come from Gloucester to Worcester, and on Thursday, 18th, to Stourport.' God purposed otherwise, and on March 2 he whom Leslie Stephen describes as 'the greatest captain of men of his century' gives his last day's watchword to his troops, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Think of a life like this, and then say to yourself the phrase 'The vulgarity of keenness,' if you really want to feel how little you are.

'Oh! but it's all very well for the Wesleys.' But it was not the Wesleys only that were in earnest. You have in the reading-room a book which I will warrant that you will find in good condition, *The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*. Turn up the life of Alexander Mather, a baker, with no special genius, one of Wesley's helpers. 'I had no time,' he says, for preaching but what I took from my sleep, so that I frequently had not eight hours' sleep in a week. I frequently put off my shirts as

wet with sweat as if they had been dipped in water. After hastening to finish my business abroad I have come home all in a sweat in the evening, changed my clothes and ran to preach at one or another chapel, then walked or ran back, changed my clothes, and gone to work at ten, wrought hard all night, and preached at five the next morning. I ran back to draw the bread at a quarter or half an hour past six, wrought hard in the bakehouse till eight, then hurried about with bread till the afternoon, and perhaps at night set off again.'

These are the men of whom the world is not worthy, these are the men whom the world accuses of 'the vulgarity of keenness,' and whom in its cheap and deadly cynicism it accuses of bad taste because they show enthusiasm. 'The fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints.'

Why do I give you illustrations of this type? Well, Coleridge has a happy phrase in which he speaks of 'the subtle poison of the easy

chair.' I want to shake some of you Kingswood boys out of your easy chairs. Remember that the very word 'enthusiast' means 'one who has God within him.' A man who sneers at enthusiasm is sneering at God. Yet some of you are slouching through life with your hands in your pockets. You are doing no harm, you say. Nor was the fig-tree, a respectable, well-grown tree, with a mighty show of leaves, and welcome shade beneath it; but because it did nothing, because it failed to realize the object of its life, 'Cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground.' Christ was not often contemptuous; He is here: 'Cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground.' Doing nothing and in the way, nothing but a stumbling-block. 'Stumbling-blocks'—what are they? Simply objects strewn about with no particular purpose. The very same objects might have made a most useful wall; but here, because without a purpose, they are simply in everybody's way. As I stand here and cast my eyes over you I could name a dozen such stumbling-blocks, boys who slouch through life with

their spiritual hands in their pockets—I use the phrase again, for I want something of the scorn I feel for this attitude to stick—boys who just do enough work to avoid punishment, boys who are in the way, stumbling-blocks, cumberers of the ground. No wonder God Himself is disgusted, nauseated, sickened Just think of that tremendous metaphor which follows my text. Neither good nor evil, neither hot nor cold, like half-warm water which makes a man vomit, 'I will vomit thee out of My mouth.'

You K. S. boys, many of you, do not know your own capabilities. You have immeasurably more in you than you have got out, or ever will get out unless something can rouse you. Three parents wrote to me in one week, 'My boys care for nothing but games.' Games are very admirable things in their way. I have no doubt Christ played games when He was a boy, and I have not the least doubt that He played well. But the only justification we have for spending any part of a terribly short life in games is that, rightly played, they fit us for doing our

work better. Life is not a game. Alas that so many of you fail to see this until you learn it in the world's hard school! How many of you have ever honestly done your best for a whole week together? How many of you have made the insuperable difficulty bend to your will? The thing that is easy gets done; the other does not. And there are a few of you —I thank God, very few—words struggle ineffectively to tell you how I scorn your actions; boys who at the bottom of their miserable little hearts know that they are making but a poor thing out of their Kingswood life, and who solace themselves by sneering at the few who 'swot' and making their hard task harder still. Cowards, cowards, cowards! Do not you hear Christ's contempt? 'Cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground.'

'But I am doing no harm,' you tell me. The point is not that; it is whether you are doing any good. Only the strenuous and the eager really live; the rest vegetate. Are you content with a vegetable existence? Listen to God's pronouncement upon the *dolce-far-*

niente, the sweet-do-nothing type of life: 'Inasmuch as ye did it *not* . . . these shall go away into everlasting punishment.'

'But I mean to live my life in earnest, only you can't expect it in boyhood.' My young friend, defects in life must be attended to at once, or they become beyond remedy. A few years ago a great bridge was being built over the St. Lawrence River above Quebec. When completed it is to be the largest in the world. On the morning of one day[1] the consulting engineer in New York sent a telegram to the Phœnix Bridge Company, who were building it: 'Do not place any more load on the Quebec Bridge at present; better look into it at once.' The telegram reached the office; the chief engineer was out; the under-engineer thought there was no hurry, that nothing need be done at once, that tomorrow would do. For two hours the warning of the telegram was before him, yet a train was run out to the very end of the unfinished

[1] August 29, 1907: but the bridge has fallen again this year (1916).

projecting cantilever, 180 feet above the river, the gigantic tower leaned, quivered, toppled over, and in a moment £800,000 worth of steel and several years' work crashed into the river below. Seventy-five lives were lost because a fool of a sub-engineer thought that to-morrow would do. You boys have heard a sermon on 'To-morrow' once a year at the very least, and, despite all you have heard, you trust to to-morrow. You will be keen when you begin life, will you? Do you think the habit of slackness can be shaken off in a moment? The very girders of your life are rusting. Before you know where you are the structure of your life will have crashed down in irremediable ruin.

May I turn, in conclusion, to say that all that I have been saying of your secular life applies to your spiritual life? Only there is this difference, that it applies with a thousand times more force, for the truth increases in intensity as you raise its application to a higher sphere. What a startling phrase our text is, 'I would thou wert cold or hot'! Christ would rather

have you nothing than only half in earnest. The spiritual idler, the Meroz who merely 'came *not* to the help of the Lord against the mighty,' is the greatest enemy Christianity has to battle with. I had rather be splendidly wrong than languidly right. The *dolce-far-niente* attitude to the tale of the cross is a greater crime than an active disbelief in it. Yet I am not sure that this is not the most real danger which threatens the spiritual life of us ministers' sons. We hear the great tale so often that we lose the grandeur of its stimulus, just as we fail to see the unfathomable glory of the clouds because we see them daily. Yet the attitude of amiable indifference towards the tragedy of the cross and towards the life of absolute self-surrender which it demands, if it is true, is the one attitude that is positively intolerable. Deny Christianity, if you will, or fling yourself unreservedly before the cross of Christ; but between these extremes there is no logical middle path. Yet you ministers' sons are taking a middle path, many of you. Christianity has your approval—your gentle

patronage, if you will—you 'have no objection to Christianity,' and there it ends. 'No objection'—in face of the story of the Love that poured itself out for the world! You condescend to approve of Christ's pierced hands! You yield languid admiration to the Wearer of the crown of thorns! I tell you, if you do not mean to make Christianity the chief thing of your life, do not go in for it at all. Do not flirt with it. Fling aside your creed or live up to it. For God's sake do not profess to believe the amazing story of Christ and then loiter sunnily through life as if it did not concern you.

Was there ever a more pathetic tale than that of the Foolish Virgins? See them, these five merry, light-hearted girls, tricked out in their bridal finery, and in all the eagerness of their young hearts looking forward to the wedding-feast. Bad? Of course not; they are eager to play their timbrels when the merriment begins. They might have remained in the comfort of their own homes, but they faced the discomfort of going out into the night to meet the bridegroom. When his coming was

delayed they slept, it is true; but so did the others upon whom no shadow of blame rests. Like the others, they remained to meet him, and they stayed at their post till midnight. But they were only half in earnest. Their lamps were only half filled with the oil of praise. Those fast-emptying lamps—they had used them when they set out from their homes, and they must have noted how low the oil was running! They had suffered their soul's light to grow dim, and had rested content in its eclipse. And the result—you all of you know it—is that keenest kind of tragedy which treads upon the heels of happiness. The wedding-garments are wasted, the good wishes for the bridegroom which were not strong enough to lead to earnestness of life are rejected like their trampled garlands.

Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too Late, too Late! ye cannot enter now.

No light had we: for that we do repent,
And learning this the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!
O let us in that we may find the light!
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no too late! ye cannot enter now.

IX

CONSCIENCE

A good conscience: which some having thrust from them made shipwreck.—1 Tim. i. 19.

Conscience, the *con-scientia*, the knowledge with ourselves and within ourselves of good and evil, was born in the Garden of Eden. Notwithstanding this, it was very late indeed in the history of the race when this wonderful faculty first came to be separately recognized; and it is a curious fact that although the completest and what is said to be one of the noblest expositions of the claims of conscience occurs in a Chinese writer (Mencius, who wrote at least three hundred years before Christ), yet neither the word 'conscience' nor anything very closely approaching to the idea occurs in the Old Testament, nor in any of the genuine recorded sayings of Christ; and it is to

St. Paul and to his disciple, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that we owe almost all the New Testament references to the subject. The realization of all that conscience means is, in fact, one of the great moral discoveries which we owe to St. Paul. The word itself appears to occur first in a Greek poet, Menander, who wrote somewhere about 300 B.C.; and as Paul quotes once at least from Menander's works, it is safe to guess that Menander gave to Paul the word which has meant so much to later times. 'Conscience,' says Menander, 'is a God for all of us,' meaning that we each and all carry God about within us. Socrates had said much the same thing a century earlier when he spoke of the divinity within him which told him what to do, or rather what not to do, in every crisis of his life. If one might hazard a guess as to why an idea of such tremendous moral import was so late in developing, or, at least, in taking definite shape, it may be suggested that the need was not so much felt by the Jew of the Old Dispensation to whom Jehovah was so often thought to be visibly

present, nor by the Greek who peopled with his gods every running stream and every woodland glade, nor by Christ's immediate disciples with the Master's gracious presence at hand; and that it was not until that presence was withdrawn, and the disciples left to walk by faith and not by sight, that God within us took the place of Emmanuel, 'God with us,' and the Shechinah of God's visible presence was replaced by the more glorious Shechinah of the Indwelling Holy Spirit whose voice is conscience. The Master had in fact, though not in name, foretold the rebirth of conscience when He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. 'And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness.' Conscience, then, is the voice of the Holy Spirit as heard in the silences of a man's soul.

I wish that I could somehow find words to impress upon you the supreme grandeur of this, the Christian conception of conscience. When in the silences of your soul you hear a voice:

> What hast thou done, O soul of mine,
> That thou tremblest so?
> Hast thou wrought my task and kept the line
> *I* bade thee go?

do you realize that in very fact, and in no metaphor at all, that voice is the very Voice that bade the world to be? The worst of it is that we are so metaphor-ridden that we dismiss this as such, and so fail to see that in the Peniel of our souls we have been with God face to face. But, I ask you, is it a metaphor? Is there one here who does not acknowledge that he has at times heard a voice within him as plainly as he now hears mine, and has been utterly unable to convince himself that the voice was his or came from himself? 'I conceive a man,' says Emerson, 'as always spoken to from behind and unable to turn his head and see the speaker. In all the millions who have heard the voice none ever saw the face.' Who was it, do you think, that hissed, 'You coward!' to you when you shirked the right and did the wrong? Is it really a scientific explanation to talk of it as being the voice of 'your better self,' when always its

promptings are against your inclination, bidding you choose the narrow way and the stones rather than the broad way and the grass ; when sometimes you have started, and, in Emerson's phrase, tried to look round to see where the voice came from ? It is an explanation which explains nothing. Have you really two selves ? Who awaked your better self that it should speak at all ?

No, I tell you again that in very fact, and in no metaphor at all, conscience is the voice of the Holy Spirit as heard in the silences of a man's soul. I want you to see what has been called ' the absolutely unfathomable glory of Christianity as a philosophy.' ' There are men,' says a great American writer, ' who ask vaguely where He is who spoke once as never man spake, and since has governed the centuries. Where is He whose pierced right hand lifted heathenism off its hinges and turned into another channel the dolorous and accursed ages ? ' And the answer is that ' at this miraculous hour the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world is, not was. This

light has its temple in conscience.' 'Our cheeks,' he continues, 'may well grow white and the blood of the ages leap with a new inspiration.' We have been with God, and we knew it not.

This is fact, not fancy; scientific fact, not pulpit rhetoric. Do you cry forlornly with Job—as, I think, at times we all have done —'Oh that I knew where I might find Him that I might come even to His seat!'? The answer is: in your soul, for He is there; and whether you have accepted Him as your Lord and Master or not, He is speaking to you constantly, even as certainly as I am speaking to you now. I want any of you who have not yet seen any certain proof that God exists to ask yourselves whether you may not find it in conscience. If you still are inclined to put its promptings down to your shadowy 'better self,' then ask yourself further how it is that, however far back you trace your history, you can never remember one single occasion when you regretted having followed its guidance. Is your 'better self' as faultless as that?

We define conscience, then, as 'the voice of the Holy Spirit as heard in the silences of a man's soul.' 'But does it not follow, then,' you ask, 'that conscience can make no mistake?' There have been thinkers who have answered 'Yes' to this question, notably Kant, one of the greatest of them all. But most people, St. Paul certainly, and the common usage of to-day with him, would not limit conscience to the voice *as uttered* (which can make no mistake), but would extend it to the voice *as heard*. There never was a more conscientious man than St. Paul, yet he acknowledges that once at least he heard the voice amiss: 'I verily thought with myself,' he says in his speech before Agrippa, 'that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' In his Epistles he speaks of a 'weak conscience,' 'a clean conscience,' 'a good conscience,' and even of the possibility of conscience being 'seared with a hot iron'; and it is clear that to Paul the conscience is rather the faculty that hears God's voice than the voice itself. This faculty is so far

under man's control that he may train it until it catches the least whisper, or dull it until very thunder passes unheard; and there is the awful possibility that the voice may lapse into final silence. He may pervert it so that the voice is distorted just as a phonograph distorts the utterance of one who speaks into it, and then God's voice as his conscience presents it to him may be as little like God's own as the tinny squeak of a phonograph is to a majestic original. This explains the curious spectacle which we see to-day of one half of England sneering down the conscience of the other half as the 'Nonconformist conscience,' as it explains also how some seem driven by conscience, as in the Passive Resistance movement, to do that which to the conscience of others is sin. But I think that no degradation of man can so far alter the inner ear that, at least where personal conduct in regard to the eternal laws of right and wrong is concerned, it hears God's 'yea' as 'nay,' God's 'nay' as 'yea'; and I believe, further, that there are crises in a man's life when the inner ear,

however diseased and perverted, seems miraculously restored so that for awhile the voice is heard again as clear as ever:

> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain.
>
> All several sins, all us'd in each degree,
> Throng to the bar, crying all—Guilty! Guilty!
> I myself
> Find in myself no pity to myself.

Now that we see what 'conscience,' the most difficult word in our text, means, let us turn for a moment to the text itself: 'Having faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck.' Paul's metaphors are never very easy to trace, for he changes very rapidly from one to another, and there are often three or four in a single sentence. It is possible, therefore, that the details of this metaphor may not have been very clearly defined in his own mind, but we may not be far wrong in thinking of life as a voyage at sea; faith as the acceptance of a particular course on the chart, the power by which we look for 'the city which hath the foundations,'

the impulse by which we are driven to seek 'a better country—that is, a heavenly'; and conscience the power which directs the ship. Possibly to Paul conscience represents the steersman, and with the words 'having thrust from them conscience' we are to picture the steersman of life taken by the shoulders and pushed out of the way, just as it is possible to push conscience out of the way, just as it is possible—I say it reverently—to lay sacrilegious hands on the very shoulders of the Holy Ghost, and bid Him stand aside.

The details of the metaphor matter little, however; and perhaps, since every man is really the steersman of his own bark, we may catch the spirit of the metaphor best if we modernize it, and say that faith is the chart and conscience the compass of the ship whose fortunes I direct, and that shipwreck awaits me if I do not follow the compass.

Now the points in regard to conscience which I wish to impress upon you are mainly two:

i. If, in Paul's phrase, you push conscience out of the way, the inner ear by which you

listen to its voice may be so dulled that the voice of God is barely heard, and finally becomes silent, at least for awhile.

ii. On the other hand, the ear of conscience may be trained until it is minutely susceptible to God's voice.

The ear of conscience may be dulled; the ear of conscience may be trained.

First, then, *the ear of conscience may be dulled.* History is full of cases. There is Nero, who, when he was first asked to sign a death-warrant, regretted that he had ever learned to write, but who came to count it among the dearest pleasures of his life to sit in the amphitheatre and watch the writhings of tortured slaves. But we need not go to history, for every day life supplies us with innumerable parallels. Any faculty is dulled when we do not use it. The apprentice, when he first enters the machinery workshops, finds his ear deafened with the clang and clatter of the hammers, but soon ceases to notice it. Take a common parallel, almost commonplace; if you do not attend to the bell which

summons you in the morning, in a few days you will cease to hear it at all. It is the same with all our senses. Medical students have often told me how they fainted at their first operation. If I may quote again an illustration which I have used once before, many a man begins life with hands uplifted in horror. 'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' and the pity of it is that, in the words of the old Puritan commentator, 'The dog did it.' Some years ago, when I was preaching to you from the text, 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust yet more,' I pointed out to you the terrible law of sin, that each sin rendered the next easier by rendering the last less horrible. To-night I view the matter from another point by insisting that each sin renders the next easier by rendering the protest within fainter. You remember how when the first unclean thought presented itself your whole being revolted; you felt yourself unclean for days afterwards; you recoiled from yourself; like Lucretia with the stain of Tarquin upon her, you would have welcomed the knife; but now—but now

maybe—I hope not—maybe, foul words pass your lips and no longer burn them, foul thoughts are in your soul and make their nest there with no one to disturb them, and foul deeds are on the hands that used to be raised in prayer. Conscience is dulled unless it lives constantly in suitable surroundings. This is why it is so hard for a man to live straight without Christ, by conscience alone. The man who lives in sewers soon fails to notice the smell. Take a magnet and let it rest anywhere outside the great lines of magnetic force which girdle the earth, and it will slowly lose all its magnetic virtues. This is the case with the magnet of your soul. Let your soul lie anywhere outside the great streams of influence which radiate from Christ, and its magnetic power will slowly vanish. A man must always eventually take upon him the colour of his environment. The butterfly which hovers to and fro over brown leaves will eventually become brown itself. The Arctic fox grows white as the polar bear, who was once as brown as he was.

Do not imagine that great influences alone are

efficient, and that you may with comparative safety compromise with little sins. There is no such thing as a small sin. When you sin at all, you have laid your hands on the shoulders of the Holy Ghost and pushed Him out of the way. The least little rusty iron nail can deflect the compass. A nail driven by a careless carpenter too near the binnacle has been known to cause a shipwreck. For any accurate experiment in magnetism you must remove even the penknife from your pocket. There must be no compromise with sin.

But though conscience may be silenced, it can never be killed. Sooner or later it will awake, and then will be heard what has been described as the laughter of the soul at itself, which, it has been said, it 'rarely hears more than once without hearing it for ever.' I do not need to multiply instances of this, for I have no desire to work upon your feelings. Take one only, the case of Charles IX of France, who had permitted the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572. Two years later, only twenty-four years of age, he lay dying. He was haunted

by the thought of what he had done. So terrible was his remorse that he actually sweated blood, and blood poured from his eyes and nose. 'Every moment,' he said to Paré, the surgeon who stood by him, 'every moment, whether I am asleep or awake, visions of murdered corpses haunt me.' Or read, if you wish for another example, one which I have not time to quote, the dream of Clarence in that great drama of the conscience, Shakespeare's *King Richard III*, and you may be prepared to admit that the unrolling of the Judgement Books in the Last Day may, after all, be only the unfolding of the Books of Memory, with the Commentary of Conscience.

Lastly, *the ear of conscience may be trained.* It is so with all our other faculties. The untrained ear in music can with difficulty tell which of two notes is really the higher in pitch; the trained ear can distinguish each separate note in a chord. The trained eye of a doctor will perceive the indications of disease long before the patient is himself conscious of anything wrong. Take a walk

in the country with one who has studied the country, and mark how he interprets for you the language of the birds and unfolds the poetry of the flowers. Or go, still better, if you can, with one who can interpret for you

> The silence that is in the lonely hills,
> The sleep that is beneath the starry sky.

The training of conscience is a training to catch Christ's voice. They tell that when the five months' siege of Lucknow was drawing to its end, a Scotch girl, who lay dying, started up, saying that she heard the sound of her native bagpipes. Those who stood by her bedside listened and listened, but heard nothing. 'Nonsense, Jeanie; it's all your fancy.' 'Fancy? It's no fancy; I've heard them too often over the heather. There they are again, man. Dinna ye hear? "The Campbells are coming."' She was right, and it is even so with the soul. He who has once heard Christ's voice will often hear it when others hear only the fevered fancy of a dream.

I must make no attempt at this late hour

to do more than glance at the various ways in which the spiritual ear may be trained. The analogy of the training of the other senses holds very closely. The man who wishes to train his ear will hear good music only. The man who wishes to train his literary sense will avoid trash. The man who wishes to train his spiritual ear will exclude from it every hurtful sound, and dwell even during the dull realities of life always 'in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.' There must be the listening attitude: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' There must be now and then freedom from distraction. Get alone with yourself. You will hear Christ best if now and then you stand alone with Him under the bare vault of heaven and listen. If you hear His voice thus, as you will, you will hear it more readily the next time when He speaks to you in the busy schoolroom or in any eager activity of life. Then there must be sincerity, a stern resolve to follow Christ whithersoever He goeth, prepared to walk with Him on Golgotha, if so He calls, as gladly as in Galilee.

Will no one yield himself to-night? I have a passionate longing for your souls which masters utterance. There are times when God seems to stand awfully before me and say, 'What hast thou done with those souls that I lent to thee to train?' Will you not yield? There are some who have given the best years of their school life at least to self. Will you not give the rest to Christ? There are others who were Christ's men once, but deserted because the service was hard. Will you not re-enlist? Or shall Christ brand you as a coward? The Holy Spirit is pleading with some of you now. Oh, I beseech you, lay not your hands on His shoulders nor thrust Him aside, for that way lies shipwreck and death.

X

FAITH

Faith is the assurance given by Hope, the proof of the Unseen. —HEB. xi. 1 (paraphrased).

THE writer of this noble letter to the Hebrews, a man whose name we do not know and cannot guess, nowhere rises higher than in the magnificent words which I have chosen for our text. He who will take these words and make them his companion, live with them and make them his own, thinking for two or three days of nothing else, will find himself on a mountain height of spiritual experience where all the petty quibbles that beset his thought are seen as a fog below him. Let him remember that they were written by a man whose hopes had been shattered in order that they might be more nobly rebuilt. The earlier generation of the apostles, Paul among the number, had

hoped to see the kingdom of Christ upon earth which their Lord had seemed to promise them. 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them and greeted them from afar'—the metaphor is that of belated travellers in the night who suddenly see the light in a distant house and shout with gladness at the thought of the shelter awaiting them. 'These all died in faith,' but they died before they reached the shelter of the home for which they had hoped, and died in the night; and it is the province of our writer to reconstruct the hopes of his time in order to give his hearers faith to face the darkness of the persecution which the growing hostility of Rome was forcing upon them. He does so by giving a series of examples of men, all of whom, he expressly says, 'received not the promise'; men whose hopes were nobly disappointed on earth, but who gained those hopes in the Hereafter because, in that confident assurance founded upon Hope which we call Faith, they went straight forward and did always the noblest thing that they saw. Faith was to

Abraham or to Moses, as it must be to us, in the words of a living writer, 'the resolute choice to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis':

Upheld
By ■ power and ■ purpose which, if no one else beheld
In life, we beheld, so—hoped.

Instead of proceeding at once to any definite and logical subdivision of our subject, it will be helpful, I think, to spend some time in a more careful examination of our author's phrase that we may gain an insight into the nature of Faith.

It is curious that, while our writer explains the whole course of Old Testament history to be a record of Faith, the word occurs there only twice, and once only (in Habakkuk) in its proper sense. In the New Testament few words are commoner than this of Faith, but the present is the only passage where any attempt is made to explain exactly what Faith is; and it is unfortunate that there is not a little doubt as to what one of the words employed really means, while a second word is far from certain. In the A.V. you read, 'Faith is the substance of things

hoped for'; in the R.V., 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for'; in the margin of the R.V., 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for'; while there is still a fourth translation possible, 'Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.' One of these translations, I think, we can dismiss at once, though I should dearly like to keep it—that of the R.V. margin, 'Faith is the giving substance to things hoped for.' Hopes are insubstantial, shadowy things. Faith takes them, this translation would say, and clothes them and makes them real. Hopes are castles built in Spain; Faith gives them bricks and mortar, and turns them into solid realities. The idea is magnificent and well worth developing; but I cannot think that it is the writer's meaning here, and there does not appear to be a shadow of evidence in Greek for this use of the word as an act.

The translation of the A.V. needs a little more consideration, 'Faith is the substance of hope.' The word 'substance' is a literal translation into Latin of the Greek word used. It does not quite mean what you would think at first,

'The material of which hope is made.' If Faith were the material out of which Hope is builded, Faith is, after all, a poor sort of thing, for hopes are often of the stuff that dreams are made of. Hopes may be dupes. The word, however, means much more than this. Sub-stance, 'that which stands underneath,' that which is the reality at the bottom of things. If you will turn to Heb. i. 3 you will see that the writer once at least uses the word in this sense (it is translated 'person,' A.V.; 'substance,' R.V.) when he speaks of Christ, in an immortal phrase, as 'the reflected splendour of God's glory and the express, the stamped-out image of His real Self.' It may be that the writer means this here: 'Faith is the reality, the real self, which lies at the bottom of hopes.' I can only say that I cannot convince myself that this meaning fits into his use of the word 'faith' in this chapter. The Greek may forbid us to render the word as an act, but there can be no doubt to me that it is something more nearly allied to an act than this meaning would show.

Before I turn to the translation which I have actually chosen, I should like to say a word upon one which only a few years ago was shown to be possible. Many of you will know that during the last twenty years a number of Oxford scholars have been busy in turning over the rubbish-heaps, the waste-paper baskets, so to speak, of various deserted Egyptian towns. The dry air of Egypt has preserved the scraps of papyrus almost perfectly until to-day, and very wonderful some of the discoveries have been—tradesmen's bills of the time of Christ, law documents of all kinds, a schoolboy's letter, fragments of lost works of the old Greek poets, and here and there, most precious of all, a new saying of Jesus Himself. Now among the scraps this word of our text is used now and then in a wholly new sense, that of 'title-deed.' The title-deed of a piece of land shows how we got the land, and who had it before us; and if any ask what right we have to hold it, we produce this title-deed. Faith is the title-deed of our hopes—it may be that this is the meaning of our text. Hope builds for herself

'Cloud-capped towers' and 'gorgeous palaces'
And 'solemn temples.'

But what right has she to dwell there? Faith is the title-deed which Hope will wave in your face if you ask her the question. It is Faith that confers upon Hope the right to live in her palaces. It is the hope of all, when the long day's work is done, to rest in the many mansions of the Father's house; but it is Faith alone which establishes a title. Faith is the title-deed of Hope. A very beautiful meaning for the text; but again I cannot persuade myself that any such meaning can be read into the word 'faith' when it reappears, verse by verse, in this chapter. In any case it does not justify the existence of Faith, nor render it easier to reach it, however much we long for it.

I turn now to the text of the R.V., 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for.' Still here, however, the phrase may have two meanings even in English. It may be 'that which makes us sure of our hopes'; and this only expresses again in another form that Faith is the title-deed of Hope, a rendering which I cannot

think covers, at all events, the deepest part of the writer's meaning. It may, however, be 'assurance, confidence which belongs to Hope,' and this at last is the meaning which I want to leave with you. 'Faith is the assurance given by Hope, the confidence born of Hope, and the proof, the only proof you will ever get, the only proof worth having, of the Unseen.' I could show you, if I had time, that the word which has been puzzling us so long is three times translated 'confidence' by the Revisers (Heb. iii. 14, 2 Cor. ix. 4, 2 Cor. xi. 17), and that it is our writer who uses it once in this very sense. The Greek historian Polybius, in describing how Horatius kept the bridge, says that his enemies feared his confidence (the word is the same) more than his strength. Faith is the confidence born of Hope. It is the hopeful men who conquer the world. A man who never doubts that clouds will break will always march 'breast-forward.' 'The war will end disastrously; we shall be beaten,' said Napoleon III to one of his marshals at the beginning of the war with Prussia. 'Sire,'

replied the marshal, 'only let your opinions be known to the troops, and your anticipations will be fulfilled.' Napoleon's spirit did spread to his troops, and the result was Sedan. Faith is the confidence born of Hope. There is no Sedan for Faith.

The greatest painter of our time has painted Hope. You may see his picture any day in the Lower Fifth Form room. He paints a woman blindfolded and sitting upon the summit of the world, mistress of it all even in her blindness. Heavy clouds are above and below, and for light there is but the shining of a solitary star. In her hands is a broken lyre. One string of it only is left intact. Her head is bent with a proud, glad smile to catch the music of that solitary string. Her fingers are in act to twitch that string; and she will do it, though, should it break, all music will be banished from the world. She knows that God can make music with broken strings. Look on the picture, when you next have the chance, and tell me if that may not be the mother of noble daughters. Faith is one of the daughters of Hope.

It is time, however, that I warned you that by 'hope' I do not mean hope generally, but, as the second part of the text shows, hope of the Unseen. It may be helpful at this stage, even though half-way through the subject, to adopt some sub-divisions:

i. A hope of the Unseen is all that God gives us until we trust Him. The gift is of God, and one of His grandest.

ii. Faith is the assurance given by the bold assumption that the hope is real.

iii. Faith, once gained, itself provides the proof, and the only proof man will ever get or ever needs of things unseen.

i. *A hope of the Unseen is all that God gives us until we trust Him.* A hope, mind you, and not a proof. It is not God's will that these things should be matter of mathematical demonstration. Take a proposition in geometry, and mark how each step inevitably follows from the last. There are certain assumptions, called axioms, made at the beginning of the work. You cannot prove them, it is true, but you do not doubt them. They commend themselves

to your common sense. These granted, your argument goes inexorably forward, and you reach conclusions of which you could not have dreamed when you began. There is no such process in the attempt which Faith makes to measure the world. 'What,' you say, 'cannot man really prove that God exists, that Christ rose from the dead?' Certainly not. You can give a chain of reasoning which shall justify a hope that God is, a hope that man has an immortal soul, and step by step you can build up the historical evidence that the Nazareth carpenter showed Himself 'King of kings and Lord of lords' by conquering the foe that has conquered every king. But, always, when you have done this there will be an uneasy voice at the back of your mind which hints that perhaps the facts may be otherwise explained, perhaps the witnesses may have been mistaken. Like Thomas, you will say, 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, there is no chance of my believing' (John xx.

25.)[1] Stifle this voice by reason you never shall. The question why God so arranged the world is a fair one to ask, and ought to be answered, so far as we can, if we are to convince ourselves that God has treated us fairly. But it is a big question into which I cannot enter to-night further than to hint that it is not His purpose to force men to His heart. If God's existence were as logically certain as a proposition in Euclid, there would be a moral compulsion to virtue that would deprive it of its value. It is certain that a man who cannot swim will get drowned if he gets into deep water. It is no merit in such a man that he keeps out of the water. You call him a fool if he does not. If it were equally certain that God existed, and hated and would punish sin, it is no merit in a man that he serves Him. You would call him a fool if he did not. No sane man would sin if it were absolutely certain that God existed.

Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he must.

[1] Thomas does not say, 'I will not believe.'

This answer, I know, suggests another question: Does not God wish to banish sin that He hides His presence from us? I must not stop to answer it further than by saying that if the Almighty had but two alternatives before Him, that sin and disbelief should remain in the world, or that man should become a machine, doing only what he must, I think He could not but choose the former. Apart altogether from such considerations, let me tell you that the great saints of God would not have it otherwise. Ask any man who really knows God whether he would be glad to see for himself a logical proof that God exists. It is a strange thing, but he will tell you that he would not. A hope is all we ask for, all we really ought to want before we trust Him.

ii. *Faith takes this hope, makes the bold assumption that the hope is real, and goes forward in confident assurance.* Thus Faith implies an act. Hope sees in its dreams the ladder reaching into heaven. Faith resolutely plants its feet upon the rungs, and takes the risk

of their vanishing. Hope sees the horses and chariots of fire round about its Dothan. Faith, strong in these insubstantial defenders, faces the horses and chariots of the King of Syria. Hope believes that this life is not all. Faith takes the risk that Hope is dreaming, and resolves to act upon the assumption that 'earth is but a pupil's place.' Faith is, and must be, in the first instance, a leap in the dark. It is, I repeat, 'the resolute choice to stand or fall by the noblest hypothesis.' 'To stand or fall'—Faith's act always contains this alternative, to 'stand or fall.' You must say to Christ, 'If I perish, I perish on Thy shoulder; if I sink, I sink in Thy vessel; if I die, I die at Thy door'; and you need not think that you are not ready to come to Christ because of your 'ifs.' Faith is—taking the risk, venturing all on your hopes, going forward in confident assurance that your hopes of the Unseen are true.

iii. *When the venture of Faith is made, you shall receive a nobler certitude of the Unseen than logic can ever give.* It is only the first step of Faith that is a leap in the dark:

> Nothing before, nothing behind;
> The steps of faith
> Fall on the seeming void—and find
> The rock beneath.

The 'whys' of logic become impertinences to him who knows. You will hold the Unseen, at times at least, more firmly than you ever held a scientific truth:

> The flesh I wear,
> The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
> Than my belief—explained to you or no.

Do you say that this whole scheme of things is irrational? Excuse me, it is exactly the order which is followed out in common life. Let me repeat my divisions, that you may see how exactly they are followed:

i. A hope of the Unseen is all God gives us until we trust Him.

ii. Faith is the confident assurance which resolutely acts on the assumption that hopes are real.

iii. The effect of Faith is to provide a proof of the Unseen.

Now let me give you a homely illustration. It may show you that Faith has a greater

place in common life than you believed. Let me ask you to think of a Somersetshire labourer, to whom life is one long struggle against starvation. He hears of a country called Canada, where there is plenty of work and a man need not starve. He begins to hope. That is all he can do until he trusts the friend who told him. He cannot prove the statement; he can only hope. Faith arises when he resolves to act on his hopes, and books his passage and waves aside his neighbours' sneers. Faith once gained, if he goes resolutely forward and braves the Atlantic storms, he will get his proof.

'All very well,' you say, 'but the facts are not parallel. Canada is there. Any one who books on an Allan liner will find it.' Granted, but you cannot prove it is there without going to it. 'Oh, but there are thousands of people who have been there and have written about it! This country of yours is hazy, and the fogs are round it always, and I have heard of shipwrecks.' My good friend, there is never a one that has embarked with Christ but has found the El Dorado, and there are multitudes

who have been there. For every man that has seen Jerusalem there are thousands that have seen the New Jerusalem. Scattered up and down, a few in every church, there are those whose eyes do continually see the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off, and who

> Wear evermore the seal of their believing
> Deep in the dark of solitary eyes.

They are the men that do the work. It is out of such stuff that heroes are made, men of whom the world is not worthy.

At the end of the Kingswood dining-hall there used to be a narrow ledge, nearly five feet from the ground. I have sometimes put a little friend of ours there and asked her to jump down. Then I have watched her, and seen how hope and fear did battle within her eyes—hope of the wild rush through the air and the love that waited at the end, and fear of the yawning gulf below, fear that found words in 'Daddy, I shall fall.' Then Faith took its great resolve to act as if Hope were truth, there was a sudden avalanche

of golden hair, and the little one was safe in her father's arms. There are those here that are even as that child. They stand irresolute before the grand adventure of Faith. They would like to take the leap if they were certain that they would reach the Father's arms; but—but—are there not those who say that the Father is dead, or, at least, that He careth not? They are tired and would fain be at rest; but is there rest anywhere to be found for the sole of their feet? To such I say, 'Act as if your hopes were facts, and you shall prove them such. Act as if God were, and you shall see Him as He is.'

XI

PRAYER

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him . . . therefore pray.—MATT. vi. 8, 9.

PERICLES never began a speech without first praying to the gods. Scipio never undertook any affair of importance without having passed some time alone in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. On the first page of each volume of his diary John Wesley wrote, 'I resolve, *Deo juvante*, to devote an hour morning and evening to private prayer.' 'I have so much to do,' said Luther once, when the pressure of his work was most severely felt, 'that I cannot get along without three hours a day in prayer.' General Havelock, the saint of the Indian Mutiny, always rose at four, if he had fixed the hour of marching at six, that he might have two hours of uninterrupted communion with

God. 'I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of 10,000 men,' said Mary Queen of Scots. Nowadays men think that Mary's fears were wasted, and that Havelock's time and Luther's might have been better spent. Belief in prayer has been whittled down until it is all but lost. The prayer-meeting is the most thinly attended of all religious services. Any kind of spiritual dissipation will draw a bigger audience, and a football match will enormously outnumber either. The process has been gradual, yet its evolution has been the work of our generation, First the physical went. It became a kind of impiety to pray about anything remotely affected by the laws of nature, of which we talk so much and know so little.

> O hear us when we cry to Thee
> For those in peril on the sea

was a prayer that might pass, because it happened to be wedded to matchless music, but which was, in very truth, divorced from common sense. The laws of nature, tempests and tidal waves included, were the expression

of the mind of Him " in whom is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning " ; and our futile attempts to check the cyclone by our prayers were a profane rebellion against His will.

Yet a consolation was left to us. We might not pray—at all events, with any expectation of being heard—that our brethren might be shielded

> From rock and tempest, fire and foe;

but the kingdom of Mind remained, and our prayers were left us that our brethren might be delivered from the shipwreck of their lives, from the quicksands of temptation, from the tempests of the soul, from the fires of passion, and from every spiritual foe. Then the whittling process began afresh. People began to see, or to think they saw, or to guess, that the laws of nature covered a wider area than they had thought, and that the mental and spiritual also were conditioned by them, that the downward gravitation of a soul was as inevitable a process as the falling of a weight.

'As well pray,' it was said, 'that that weight might hang suspended on nothing in mid-air, or move upwards of itself, as that the soul dragged downwards by its environment, or by the influences of an evil heredity, may stay its fall except by the change of its environment and the gradual crushing of its heredity.'

The solitary consolation left us was that we might pray for ourselves. Only those whose thought was hopelessly antiquated might continue to believe in anything so crude as praying for the conversion and spiritual uplifting of others. True, we could not study the records of any revival without seeing cases where such prayers were answered. Times without number in some little village chapel prayer has been made for an outsider, and even while the prayer is being uttered the outsider has entered the chapel, resistlessly led by some force which he did not understand, and his soul has passed from darkness into light. Just listen to this extract from the *Daily Mail* (August 12, 1904): 'Among the converts at Caerphilly was a married woman

who said, " Will you ask the people to pray for my husband ? " It was then about one a.m. Several prayers were at once spontaneously offered. Half an hour later the husband came into the chapel, his overcoat hiding his night-shirt and his feet in slippers. " I have been in bed," he said, " for several hours, and I cannot sleep. I have come here to give my soul to Christ." . . . They started praying again, and during the night two more entered the meeting straight from bed and surrendered.' This is from the *Daily Mail*, and it happened only a few years ago in the Rhondda Valley. But our modern thinkers pooh-pooh the whole thing; for do we not all understand that this is the effect of thought-transference, and by no means of the Holy Spirit ?

Let us pray for ourselves, then. But here we must pause once more. For are we not ourselves conditioned by law as much as our neighbours ? Besides, ' your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.' Then why ask ? The heavenly Father, whose knowledge of all our needs is so much deeper

and truer than our own, who sees our real and not our fancied wants, whose blessings fall, as His sun shines, on good and evil alike with a steady, rhythmic pulse unchanged by the futile pleadings of humanity—that heavenly Father knows our wants before our lips form the words to ask. Then why ask at all? Our Father is not merely all-knowing, but all-powerful. If these wants of ours are really for things without which our spiritual life would be the poorer, are we to believe that God will withhold them because we are either too blind to see our need of them, or too thoughtless to remember that need, or too honest to go through with what at best must be the comedy of petition if uttered by a man who believes that no prayer of his can avail to alter the predestined course of things?

There is left, then, only what is known as the subjective use of prayer, which grants that the soul itself may be raised by communion with the divine, but denies that the element of petition ought ever to enter into such communion, which admits the child to the Father's

knee, but only on condition that it ceases to be a child, and never asks for anything ; and this is a view of prayer with which you will be faced constantly in after life, which you will hear nowadays from many a pulpit. I do not say that prayer has *no* such value. Every one knows that to be even in the same room with a beautiful soul will make you long that such beauty might be yours ; how much more, then, will communion with the Father of Lights make one hate darkness and shun evil ! But I do say that if I, a weak, sinful, erring child, may not directly ask my Father for help to resist temptation, His Fatherhood is an empty name, far inferior for me to the earthly fatherhood which does permit such a request ; and I want you to observe that if once such a request be granted, the inexorable line of argument which led us to this limitation of the functions of prayer leads us back again to the widest outlook for it, and to the older view which was Paul's and Christ's. The God who can change my nature can change the nature of my friend. The God who has power to reverse the laws

of mind's development in face of that free-will which has always the awful right to say 'No' to His face becomes again the

> Eternal Father, strong to save,
> Whose arm doth bind the restless wave

Do not allow yourself to be led away by any foolish sneer that such an attitude is unscientific. The principal of the Birmingham University is one of the ablest men of science of the day, and this is what Sir Oliver Lodge wrote on the matter some years ago: 'Religious people seem to be losing some of their faith in prayer: they think it scientific not to pray in the sense of simple petition; but so far as science has anything to say to the contrary, a more child-like attitude might turn out truer, more in accordance with the total scheme.'

I beg you, then, to believe in prayer in its fullest sense. Do you ask for proof that prayer is ever answered? We have been thinking much of China during the last few years. May I take your thoughts there again? The record of the China Inland Mission is one

continued tale of the triumph of prayer. The interests of the work demand in one year a hundred additional missionaries and £10,000 more income. The heads of the mission betake themselves to prayer. They know not whence otherwise help is to come. In that year (1887) not one hundred but six hundred additional helpers volunteered their service, and £11,000 was sent in eleven different contributions. If this be the result of subjective prayer, one can only challenge the priests of subjectivity to do likewise with their enchantments.

Or take another instance which you will find in the life of Mr. Hudson Taylor, the founder of the mission. There was a certain out-of-the-way place in China, whose name I forget, where year after year there was a strange manifestation of grace. The missioner there was a man of no special power, just a plain ordinary man, with none of the magnetism about him you would expect under such circumstances; yet revivals were continually breaking forth there, and Mr. Hudson Taylor marvelled greatly as to what the secret might be. Then one year

he came home to England, and in his travels here he came one night to an equally out-of-the-way place in Gloucestershire, I think. As he and his host sat in conversation that evening, his host said to him, 'By the way, Mr. Taylor, do you know anything of ——— (naming the Chinese village)?' 'Yes. Why do you ask?' 'Well, how is the work doing there?' Mr. Taylor told him. The man's eyes filled with tears. 'For years and years, Mr. Taylor, I have prayed for that village every night.' How paltry are the 'scientific' explanations of prayer in face of a fact like this! Admit that, independently of prayer, mind can act on mind at a distance—and to me that is a proved law of nature—yet nothing is more certain than that for such action the minds must be in sympathy, tuned to one another as the receiver in the Marconi telegraphy is tuned to the electric waves that make it speak. What possible sympathy or attunement was there between this Gloucestershire village and remote China? 'East and West can never meet' Thought-transference indeed! Seek, rather, the explanation

which Christ gave when He met Nicodemus out on the lonely slopes of Olivet when the night-wind was sighing around them: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

Shall we go once more to China? The time is that of the Boxer movement of 1900, when over whole provinces it was as unsafe to name the name of Christ as it was in the days of Nero, when that remarkable woman the late Dowager-Empress of China had given out the word which consigned the Christians to beasts more pitiless than lions. My authority is the special correspondent of the *Daily Mail* (for I like to get my facts from unprejudiced sources), and this is what Mr. F. A. Mackenzie writes in a book which he published afterwards, entitled *The Unveiled East*, concerning an incident in the life of a Bible-woman whom he met in Moukden! 'During the Boxer outbreak she, with two nieces, was captured, thrown into a springless Chinese cart, and, surrounded by a

howling mob, was led towards the centre of Moukden, there to be tortured, outraged, and killed. The two nieces were crying bitterly, and the old woman turned to them and said, " Why should you cry? Let us pray! God will help us!" She herself started praying, and soon her nieces joined her, and their tears ceased. When the Boxers saw their calmness, they began to wonder what had changed them. One suggested that some spirit was guarding them, and spoke fearfully of the vengeance that came upon those who should offend the spirits. While in this mood, and as they drew near the place of execution, a Chinese gentleman passed. He cast his eye on the women. " What fools you Boxers are," he said, " to kill these women, when they might be sold for good silver! I will buy them of you." The Boxers, already uneasy, seized the opportunity, and the women were handed over and driven away in the gentleman's cart. When they reached a quiet part, their bonds were cut, and the Chinaman said with a smile, " Some day, when you are well off again, you can pay me back what I have

given for you to-day. Now you can go where you please." Is it any wonder that that old Bible-woman believes in prayer? These are the incidents that convince those, at any rate, who go through them, that prayer is a real force.' 'He shall cover thee with His pinions, and under His wings shalt thou take refuge. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. . . . A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. . . . For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.'

May I take you once more to China? The time is again the time of the Boxer riots. Few in this hall, of course, are old enough to remember the fever of anxiety which possessed Europe in the year 1900, when, after the murder of the German ambassador in Peking in June, for two months no news whatever concerning the little European colony got through to the newspapers. The curtain had descended upon the place, and we knew

not whether any living Englishman was left there; and as, morning after morning, we opened our newspapers we feared to read a tale beside which the tale of Cawnpore itself would be tolerable, for the Dowager-Empress herself was presiding over the ghastly work in Peking. Then, in the middle of August, a combined force of European, American, and Japanese troops fought their way out thither, and the curtain was lifted. With the tale of the defence of the Legations I have nothing to do to-night, though there are many incidents in it to stir the blood and make one proud to be a man. I want to take you to the Roman Catholic Northern Cathedral, where the Archbishop, Monseigneur Favrier, with a force under him consisting of a young French officer and twenty marines, an Italian officer and eleven marines, with forty rifles between them all told, 'a few Lazarist Fathers, the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul with some hundreds of orphan and foundling children confided to their care, and some thousands of Chinese converts, all starved and suffered together through the hot summer

months.' They kept themselves alive, though many sickened and died, by eating leaves of trees. 'I myself,' says Mrs. Archibald Little in her fascinating book *Round About My Peking Garden* — 'I myself saw the trees stripped of their bark, all gnawed off as far as the poor mules and ponies could reach.' Captain Gordon Casserly, an English officer (*The Land of the Boxers*), visited the place soon after, and this is what he writes: 'When we looked at the extent of the defences and compared it with the paucity of the garrison, we could scarcely understand how the place resisted attack for an hour. By all the rules of warfare it was absolutely untenable. It is surrounded on all sides within a few yards by houses which were occupied by the Chinese, who from their cover poured in an unceasing and harassing fire upon the garrison. . . . Scarce a square yard of the cathedral front was without a bullet or shell-hole through it.'

Now what was the secret of this marvellous defence, one of the most marvellous in history? In part, of course, the valour of the defenders,

for God only helps those who help themselves. On one occasion the Chinese brought a gun up within forty paces of its central door. A few rounds would have laid the way open to the stormers. 'The dauntless old Archbishop led out ten marines in a desperate sally, drove back the assailants, and, capturing the gun, dragged it back within the church.' But this bravery was a part only of the secret, and the least part. Mrs. Little shall tell the rest: 'In the end, all starving and with nothing more to eat, hearing no more firing round the British Legation, they fancied all dead there and themselves the only foreigners left in Peking. Their gates were broken down, and when the relief came the soldiers just rode in, and they who hardly believed themselves yet saved wondered how it could be that the Boxers had not long ago overwhelmed them. Yet, when asked in after days, the former Boxers replied always, "It was the river we were afraid to cross, that great river that flowed between you and us — that frightened us," till, not unnaturally, all concerned began to believe in

a miracle, for there was no river, and never had been; nor, short of a miracle, could they see how their lives had been preserved.' For them, as for His own people Israel, as frequently in later years for the Waldenses, God 'spread a cloud for a covering,' and gave the fire of His presence 'to give light' in their thickest darkness.[1]

I want you to believe in prayer as an experimental fact. I want you to believe the awful truth that you can in very deed move the Hand that moves the world. Do not allow yourself to be puzzled by any of the questions so easy to ask about the subject. Try the experiment, and deal with the questions afterwards. 'Is it right,' the great congregation at the City Temple were asked some years ago, 'is it right to imagine that God can be moved by our puny human will? Do you think that if you knock long enough at the gate of heaven God will for your importunity change His intention and become willing to listen and give you at once your heart's desire?' The question

[1] With the whole of this narrative compare 2 Kings iii. 21-25.

involves a perverse misstatement of the facts. When I say that we can move the Hand that moves the world, I assume that the Hand is willing to be moved, and that it is part of His intention that we should ask. But why should this be so? We come back to the question suggested by the text, 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.' Is it really His will that we should ask at all? Can we not leave it to the disposal of His infinitely wiser guidance? Christ's answer to this is, '. . . Therefore pray!' Paul's answer is, 'In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.'

Just a few words to show the real reasonableness of this; and in answer to the question, 'Your Father knows all you want; why pray at all?' I give a twofold reply:

i. Because God's rule is not an autocracy.

ii. Because God's rule is a Fatherhood.

God's rule is not an autocracy. There have been from time to time various types of

government in the world: an oligarchy, as at Athens, where power was in the hands of a few; a democracy, as in America, where everybody takes a hand in misgovernment; an absolute monarchy, as in Russia or China, where the rule of one man is supreme; and a limited monarchy, as in Western Europe, where the subjects assist their sovereign in ruling, though his will remains theoretically supreme. In the education of the world I believe that God has definitely adopted, if I may say so without irreverence, the form of limited monarchy. Do you ask why He did not choose an autocracy? 'Surely,' you say, 'with an infinitely wise autocrat that form of government is the best?' I say, 'No.' Autocracy under the wisest of autocrats is a form of government only fitted for babies. It does nothing to develop the self-reliance of its subjects. It is God's task to educate man. This is the work with which He occupies Himself in the lonely years of eternity. He wants giants, not pygmies, to serve Him. The production of the most perfect human

machine who never did right because he could not do wrong, who had been educated in leading-strings all his life, whom inexorable laws of nature and character had developed from the first along predestined tracks,

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,

would have been indeed a stupendous failure on God's part to attain His purpose. I say, then, that God has chosen deliberately to abrogate a part of His authority, that in order to fashion a man He has dowered him with the awful power to fling defiance in His face, and that He has made His monarchy of the universe a limited monarchy in which the subjects can modify within limits the actions and decisions of their King. Prayer is reasonable if this theory is correct: 'For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

But again, and lastly, *God's rule is a Fatherhood.* If you say that the child's wants should be provided automatically, without the need of its asking, the first effect of your

logic is to turn the government of the universe into the rigid rule of a workhouse, and deprive it of all the spontaneous freedom of the home. It is in a workhouse only that requests are no part of the programme, that all supposed needs are provided for, and food and clothing are to be had without asking. In God's vast labour-house, on the contrary, He has laid down the law of the home: 'Let your requests be made known unto God.'

But you do more than this, much more. You deprive God of what I reverently say is His greatest pleasure, the sheer personal joy at being asked. When Paul speaks of God as being 'the Father after whom every human fatherhood is named,' he at least must mean that everything that is tender and beautiful in a human father must be based on the attributes of the Eternal Father. 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.' The prophet Zephaniah is more daring still, and pictures the Almighty as actually singing for very gladness in His love: 'The Lord thy God

is in the midst of thee. . . . He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love He will joy over thee with singing.'

I was talking on these lines in my study some years ago with an old boy who had had difficulties in this matter of prayer; and as we talked there was a patter of little feet along the corridor outside, the door burst open, and a very forest of eager hands was uplifted with the cry, 'Daddy, will you mend these toys?' It was only a wooden soldier with his head off, and a doll the worse for wear. Do you think I said the little suppliant 'Nay'? Nor will our heavenly Father when He remembers

> Of what toys
> We made our joys.
> How weakly understood
> His great commanded good

Your FATHER knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. . . . Therefore pray.

XII

A CROWN OF SCORN

He saved others; Himself He cannot save.—MATT. xxvii. 42.

IT was somewhere about nine in the morning of Friday, March 18, A.D. 29. Nine hours had elapsed from the moment when Jesus had resolutely stepped forth from the peace of that upper room to meet death full in the face—nine such hours as in the history of the world none other had ever passed. He had set Himself to drink the cup to its bitterest dregs. The physical anguish was the lightest torture He had to endure. All that could be dreamed of mental anguish was added to it. For the moment His spiritual vision was clouded, and a deep depression had taken the place of that radiant fullness of communion with the Father which would have enabled

Him to do as thousands of His meaner followers did, to smile at torment and laugh at death. Those who 'followed in His train' had His presence in the darkness, which turned it all into glory and light. He had gone the road before them. 'Theirs,' it has been finely said, 'was a triumphal march along a greater Sacred Way than Roman conquerors ever trod.' Nothing is more certain than that, for the most part, they felt little or no pain. Jesus felt it all. The sleepless night; the anguish of betrayal; the flight of His followers; Peter's denial, and with it the sorrow of the thought that His life-work had meant so little that even with those who had known Him best it had produced no permanence or solidity of character; the growing mental darkness which was to end in that awful and incomprehensible eclipse of the Father's face; the loss, perhaps, for the moment of the power of seeing beyond death,—all these had combined to produce in Him that state in which a taunt stings like a whip. His nature was ever such that sneers hurt more than blows. The

moment intensified this tendency. The cross had just been set up, and this was the instant of acutest physical torment. The awful agony caused as the heavy wood jarred down into its socket and flung the Sufferer's whole weight upon the nails in His hands and upon the great single nail which passed right through both His feet was still quivering through Him when the taunts began. The main high-road to the city from the north, close beside which the cross was erected, was crowded with those who had come up to celebrate the Passover. With the callousness of a city mob they paused to jest: 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself' (Matt. xxvii. 40). 'Save Thyself'—it was the last thing Christ ever thought of doing: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?' 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' They knew not that the cross was a nobler throne than Caesar's. The priests joined in the mockery of their helpless victim.

Pointing to the tablet which Pilate had ordered to be fixed above the cross as an insult to those who had compelled him, against his inclinations, to do their will, they read it with a laugh, 'Jesus the King of the Jews'; and we can almost hear them as they shout in mockery, 'He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him.' Then there come words the ferocity of which is veiled by the polished English of our Version: 'He trusts on God; let Him deliver Him now, if He wants Him.'

But their sneers, after all, are summed up in the one I have taken for my text: 'He saved others'—they could afford to admit that now, when their helpless victim was in the relentless hands of a Roman executioner; they did not admit it once, for they put His cures down to the devil—'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.'

'He saved others; Himself He cannot save'—words meant as a sneer which were really a crown. The men who uttered them little knew that they were enunciating one of

the fundamental truths upon which all that is worth having in the moral universe is built. The text opens up great vistas of thought in every direction. The words were addressed, though the speakers knew it not, to God Himself. They are true of God Himself. They are the key to any sound thinking on the great doctrine of the Atonement. On this subject I must make no attempt to do more than throw out a thought or two which may help you in your thinking. I have no complete theory of the Atonement to give you; I have none of my own. Slowly and painfully I am coming to see something of its tremendous meaning, but I do not anticipate that for me its perplexities will vanish until the half-lights of life are done away with in the full sunshine of God's presence. But this text of mine is a firm rock upon which something enduring may be built. There are some things God cannot do. He cannot make wrong into right. He cannot coerce you into following Him. Among these things is this, that He cannot possibly save you without pain to

Himself. When the shadow of sin was flung across the universe, it did most inevitably follow that if this shadow was ever to be lifted the Hand that lifted it must be pierced. I say nothing as to why this must have been so. Only, looking around on the world and seeing that this law holds there that he who would save others cannot possibly save himself, I see nothing unscientific in assuming the law to hold across the wider universe of God. I cannot account for the law; but there are so few of the laws of the universe for which I can account that this does not trouble me. The law is there. Its dominance accounts for the noblest features of human life; and since God is at least the supreme expression of all that is good in man, the law must confine God's actions too. There is no possibility of our salvation from sin without the suffering of God. The Shepherd must suffer in finding His sheep:

> Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
> That mark out the mountain's track?
> They were shed for one who had gone astray,
> Ere the Shepherd could bring him back

Lord whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?
They are pierced to-night by many a thorn.

But I want to bring this text down to the ower levels of our own personal life. If we are to be Christs in the world, there must be at least the possibility that the world shall gloriously crown us with this selfsame sneer, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.' If at the end of our life men cannot fling this at us, we have not followed Christ to Calvary, though we may have been with Him in Galilee.

'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.' There is a very real sense, first, in which this is true of the Christian life. At all events, it is profoundly true that a man who makes it above everything his object to save himself may end by saving neither himself nor anybody else. Yet I am afraid that this is just the attitude of the majority of Christians, and this is one of the main reasons why our prayers are so dead, our Christian life so stunted and imperfect. Let us just be honest with ourselves for a moment. When we knelt this

morning for our five minutes' worship, of what did that worship consist? Four of the five minutes, I venture to say, were taken up with our own concerns, and at most one minute left for our friends and the world in general. Sometimes our whole prayer will be self and nothing but self, our paltry little struggles, the meannesses of our naked soul. All self, and yet we wonder that these little struggles are still to fight, these meannesses still colour all our views of things! Read the margin of the R.V. of Matt. xvi. 25, 'Whosoever would save his soul shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his soul for My sake shall find it.' It may not be the right translation. The Greek word for 'soul' means 'life' also, and perhaps the double sense is present in the text, so that it means, 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose his soul: and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find his soul and his soul's true life.' But whatever the translation, it contains the idea. Spiritual growth depends on spiritual sacrifice and spiritual helpfulness. If we want to grow to spiritual

strength, we must leave our growth to take care of itself and help others. For all the great workers in the spiritual world this course is imposed upon them by necessity. They have no time for the hours of communion and ecstasy which gave such a hothouse beauty to the religious life of the Middle Ages. Their communion has to be upon their feet, and not upon their knees, in the busy walks of a life which knows no leisure. Their ecstasy is the finer, rarer one of watching the growing dawn of Christ's kingdom upon earth, and the sunlight creeps up their own faces as they watch. It is the life of the richest spiritual rewards, provided only that it is not pursued with those rewards in view. Christ's tenderest ministrations are always reserved for those who go into the world, as the Son of Man did before them, 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

If you wish, like Moses, for a vision of the open face of God, you must be ready, like Moses, to lose that vision if by so doing you can help others. You remember those wonderful

words of his: 'Oh, this people have sinned a great sin. . . . Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.' Paul's words are equally remarkable: 'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost. . . . I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake.' Paul was willing to go into the outer darkness of separation from Christ for the sake of others. He could not love Christ less—that were impossible; he was willing that Christ should hide His face and seem to love him less. And this was the reason why Paul's faith was so triumphant. It was this which nerved him to set in motion the forces which have changed the face of Europe.

In our own days General Booth, the late head of an organization which, while insisting on personal righteousness, does more perhaps than any other to emphasize the selfless nature of true religion, a few years ago declared: 'Without any boast, without any vanity, I

can assure you that when I gave myself to God I did so more to save others than to save myself.'

Need I say much to contrast the spirit of this with the spirit which animates most of our religion? For many people religion is simply the most refined form of selfishness. Their ideas are too often limited to the single paltry one of keeping themselves straight. May I be personal, for I shall be of no use unless I am? You, sitting there before me, for what reasons do you attend your prayer-meetings or your class-meetings? Unless I am mistaken, for one of two—either because you find God helps you there, or because you find that through God you can get some help from other people. In either case it is self. God does help, I know that; but His help would be infinitely richer if you went to give as well as to get, and more to give than to get. I do not mean that in the prayer-meeting you must pray, or in the class-meeting speak, or in the public service preach. What I do mean is that you must always give of your sympathy, give

richly of your prayers, and leave the getting to come of itself. Do you remember the passage in which this idea is worked out in that wonderful poem in which Matthew Arnold has enshrined his father, the great head master of Rugby School? He pictures a band of travellers forcing their way through life:

> A long steep journey through sunk
> Gorges o'er mountains in snow,

until, as the night closes round them, they

> Come to the end of their way,
> To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks.'

And as the little band struggles up the keeper of the inn questions them as to whether they are all there:

> Sadly we answer: We bring
> Only ourselves! We lost
> Sight of the rest in the storm.
> Hardly ourselves we fought through,
> Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.

And then the poet turns to his father's selfless spirit:

> But thou wouldst not alone
> Be saved, my father! alone
> Conquer and come to thy goal,
> Leaving the rest in the wild.

We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the humbler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

I must pass now to the wider application of my text. The point I have just been trying to make is that it is a wrong view of Christian life to put self first. The point I now wish to make is that life as a whole is given us to use for others, and that if you want to save others and to help others you cannot possibly spare yourself. In its fashion the world recognizes this. There are no heroes whom it worships more than those who have given their lives for other people. I take an instance that I may ask you a question about it. In the summer of 1874 a number of navvies were at work upon the line of railway between Glasgow and Paisley. They stood

back upon the approach of an express train, which, upon passing them, would cross a lofty viaduct. The engine was in sight. One of the men, named Jamieson, saw that a sleeper had started, and that unless it was replaced the train would be wrecked—wrecked upon the viaduct. There was no time for words. The navvy made a sign to his nephew, also named Jamieson, and the two rushed forward. They fixed the sleeper, saved the train, and were left dead upon the spot. Now there is not a man worth shaking hands with who would not thank God from the bottom of his heart if he might be allowed to do what these humble navvies did and die as they died. The question I want to ask, then, is this: Why, if the world recognizes that a life suddenly given for others is most nobly given, does it not equally recognize that the highest ideal of life is to give it—whether quickly or slowly is God's matter—in the service of others?

Drummond tells a tale which strikes me as an instance of heroism as pronounced as that of the navvies, yet it is an instance which

most people would call quixotic. In one of his students' meetings in Edinburgh his attention was excited by a man whom he afterwards found to be an American pursuing a post-graduate medical course. Entering into conversation with the man, he found that this post-graduate course was really finished, but that he had not left England because he had formed a friendship with another man who was an atheist. 'I packed my trunks to go home,' he told Drummond, 'and I thought of this friend, and I wondered whether a year of my life would be better spent to go and start in my profession in America, or to stay in Edinburgh to try and win that one man for Christ; and I stayed.' The man was won, and became a medical missionary. The American had saved another; he had lost a year out of his own life. 'Lost?' Well, it depends upon what you call losing. 'He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.' Or what do you think of that old Leysian, Dr. Hodge, who was invalided home a few years ago from Hankow, consulted a

physician about his illness, was told that he was cured, 'but,' added the physician, 'you are not in a fit state to go out again to China. You must not go.' Dr. Hodge answered, 'I did not come to consult you on that point,' went back to China, and died. The world admires an act like this, though it may think it foolish. The fact is that the world admires nothing so much as heroism and self-sacrifice —in other people. It refuses to recognize that self-sacrifice must be the law of any life worth living. It is admitted to be a virtue, but it is an optional virtue. The point which I am—rather confusedly, I fear—trying to leave with you is that self-sacrifice is not an optional virtue, but a compulsory one, a law as much binding on you as the law of honesty.

War does not bring forth much that is good; but it does, every day, present supreme illustrations of my text, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.' The officer who has to direct the fire of his men in the trenches, and in so doing ceaselessly to expose himself;

the captain on the bridge of his cruiser; the cavalry sent to charge the guns; the dispatch-riders who must cross a zone of fire with messages for the general,—all these, if they are to succeed, must gladly live out or die out the message of the text. In humbler ways, too, every morning's papers provide illustrations. I was reading only yesterday of a village where the Germans lay in ambush for the English. They had one English prisoner, and were guarding him closely. Presently in the distance along the road was heard the tramp of the English marching unsuspectingly into the trap. The prisoner could do little, but he knew that if he could show himself it would be enough. With a sudden dash he wrenched himself free and darted into the street, to fall instantaneously with twelve bullets through him. But the others had seen, and were on the alert. The prisoner had saved them, knowing that he could not save himself.

Or may I read you this? It is only a simple tale told some months ago in a West

Country hospital, but few things in the War have touched me more. I give it you in its unlettered slang :

'Two soldiers badly wounded lay beside a dying German, . . . hot, tired, thirsty, and in pain. "Wot wouldn't I give for a drink!" remarked one man to the other. The German understood the word "drink," singularly like his own.' The 'Tommy' shall tell the rest of the tale : "'E kep' saying, "'Ere," pointing to 'is side. We thought as 'ow 'e wanted liftin' up, and couldn't rest easy, so after a bit I managed to 'oist myself up and give 'im a pull, and then I found 'e was a-lyin' on 'is water-bottle. It was full of wine and water, an' I 'eld it to 'is lips. Pore chap! 'e was nigh done then, but 'e ses, "No, not me—I die; you drink!" Pore bloke! 'e died too, 'e did, and later some o' us buried 'im proper, wiv a kind of an 'eadstone, an' on it I wrote on a bit of paper, "Ai." Paper was rare, you know, but we wanted to put somefink.'

The fact is, man is nobler than his creed.

A German—or, for the matter of that an English business man—may profess to believe that the struggle for existence and the law of the survival of the fittest is God's dispensation, and may lawfully be the leading motive of his politics and actions. Brought down to realities by the brotherhood of pain, he knows better; he recognizes the glory of self-suppression and self-sacrifice.

It is self-sacrifice, indeed, which distinguishes the higher kingdoms of nature from the lower. In the lower kingdom the stronger feeds upon the weaker. In the higher kingdom the stronger sacrifices himself to the weaker —the mother for the child, the shepherd for his sheep, the Christ for the lost. We may be some distance from the realization of this, but this is Christ's ideal; this is the ideal to which we ought all to be tending. It is this ideal which has been so marvellously quickened in these days. Many, at least, have no other motive for enlistment. None could have a better.

And I want to lay it upon you who will soon

be going out into the world that the thing you will have to settle first with yourselves is whether you will follow the Christ-ideal and become a saviour of others, or revert to the animal type and make it your object in life to prey upon others. The latter is the object which the majority of business men do silently, not daring to confess it, put before themselves. 'Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost,' is a well-known proverb only too freely acted upon in life, though it is usually the foremost, not the hindmost, in this damnable race that the devil takes. What life is to mean to you boys will depend upon your answer to this question: Do you mean to save others or to prey upon others? There is no middle course. Please, do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that you must all be preachers. You can be saviours in business. If you are called to a business life, remember to make it your ideal to be helpful rather than to be happy, to be useful rather than to be rich. Remember, too, that if life becomes easy to you it must be

because you are not playing the saviour properly. A man who saves others cannot save himself. You are a preacher or a teacher, let us say. You have no right to find preaching or teaching easy. There is something wrong if you do. Virtue must go out of you if healing is to come to others. Christ Himself felt that: 'Somebody *did* touch Me, for virtue is gone out from Me.' I would rather have the preacher who is prostrate with one service than the preacher who comes up fresh after three. Whatever you are—business man, doctor, preacher, teacher, soldier—I would have you take as your ideal in life that of self-sacrifice, eager always and only to discover some fresh way of losing your life for Christ's sake that you may the more surely find it.

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease and rest and joys.

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.
God harden me against myself!

XIII

SELF-CRUCIFIXION

If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.—MATT. xvi. 24.
I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live.—GAL. ii. 20.

OBVIOUSLY the first task which falls to us is to determine as exactly as we can the meaning of the texts. Now the first of the two which I have selected occurs unaltered in Mark, and Luke also gives it with the striking addition of the word 'daily,' 'Take up his cross daily,' so that with the utmost confidence we may assume that we have here an exact record of Christ's words. But I think that they are very commonly misunderstood. It is supposed that the words point to three characteristics as marking the loyal disciple: 'Deny himself,' 'Take up his cross,' 'Follow Me.' (1) Self-denial in the sense

in which the Salvation Army uses it when they talk of their Self-denial Week, and go without butter on their bread that they may win a few pence more for the Master's service. (2) A cross, as signifying the acceptance of whatever disabilities and awkwardnesses Christ's service may entail—the bearing of the cross of insult, a heart courageous under sneers, all the many things of which Miss Waring speaks in her hymn:

> There are briars besetting every path
> That call for patient care;
> There is a cross in every lot,
> And a constant need for prayer.

Lastly, (3) it is supposed that the would-be disciple who has denied himself of many things for Christ's sake, who has manfully crushed his crown of thorns upon his head and shouldered his cross, must guide all his footsteps by Christ's, planting his feet exactly where Christ has planted His, content always to know that 'it is the way the Master went,' and to say, 'Should not the servant tread it still?'

To interpret thus is to miss the greater part of what the text has to tell us. In the first place, if we study the word used for 'deny' in 'Let him deny himself,' we find that it cannot possibly mean 'deny' in the sense in which the word occurs in 'self-denial.' It is not in the very least a question of giving up some small luxuries, more or less. I do not know at what period this weaker sense of the English word crept into the language. It never attached itself at all, at any period, to the Greek word, and it was certainly not in this sense that Christ used it. With Christ the word means always 'repudiate,' 'renounce,' 'ignore,' 'refuse to recognize,' with possibly, even, an intensive meaning, 'renounce utterly.' If we trace out the various occasions on which the word is used in the Greek Bible, we find it once in the Old Testament, in Isa. xxxi. 7, 'For in that day they shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you.' There you have an approach to the meaning of it. 'Self' is to be dethroned

from the pedestal on which it has been placed, and rejected as a useless idol, a worn-out creed.

Then again, you have it occasionally in St. Paul. For instance: Titus ii. 12, 'Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world.' Clearly, here 'denying' means 'repudiating,' 'renouncing.' We shall get closer still to the meaning if we follow out a suggestion made by the Greek Fathers. They did not water the text down to mean the absence of butter upon one's bread in the mornings. 'We should best learn,' says one of them (Theophylact), 'what denying oneself is, by considering exactly what is meant by denying other people.' Now it so happens that the slang word 'cut' expresses Christ's meaning very closely. You meet a man in the streets who has played you a shabby trick. As you pass him you refuse to see him, you 'cut him dead.' 'If any man would come after Me,' says Christ. 'let him cut his old self dead.' The word is exactly the word used of Peter's

denial of Christ: 'And again he denied with an oath, "I know not the man."' The follower of Christ is to renounce, repudiate, ignore himself as thoroughly as Peter did his Master. He is to say to self, once for all, 'Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.' I shall consider more in detail, later, all that is involved in this; but meanwhile I want to fix on your minds that the first clause in our text means that he who would follow Christ must repudiate, renounce, ignore self. Have a clear distinction between self-denial and denial of self. Self-denial means the giving up of a part of self. Denial of self means the giving up of the whole of it.

But the man who would come after Christ must not merely repudiate self; he must also take up his cross. What are we to understand by this? Unfortunately, the word 'cross' has suffered in much the same way as the word 'self-denial.' The gradual degradation which has attended it is a curious and rather a saddening phenomenon. It was, indeed, a religious symbol long before the time of Christ,

though it is doubtful whether any such use of it was known to the Jews of Christ's day To them it was a symbol of an unspeakably hideous and degrading punishment, as the gallows is with us, a punishment accompanied with lingering horrors at which the imagination reels. Christ's death shed a glory round it for all time. It became the symbol of a complete renunciation followed by a completer triumph. It was such to the early Christians. It was such to some at least of the old Crusaders, who, when they wore a cross upon their shoulders and marched under the banner of the cross, meant at least that they were ready to venture life itself for their faith. To them 'to take up the cross' was to take the first step to death. All this has been changed by a softer modern generation which takes its religion as easily as it takes its amusements strenuously. We are in some danger of forgetting that it is still true that 'no cross, no crown,' and very probable that only a tinsel crown can be purchased by a tawdry imitation of the cross.

I look into a modern dictionary, and I find a 'cross' defined as 'anything that thwarts, obstructs, perplexes, or troubles; hindrance, vexation, misfortune, opposition, trial of patience.' 'To what base uses do we come!' The Cross of Christ has become a 'trial of patience,' or, maybe, an ornament to be dangled at the end of a watch-chain, the decoration of a window, an empty symbol of a creed only half believed, an Oriental and exaggerated figure of speech, a cheap substitute for a struggle which the crusaders of to-day never dream of making.

'A cross: anything that thwarts, obstructs, perplexes, or troubles; hindrance, vexation, opposition, trial of patience'—is this what Christ meant when He talked of taking up His cross? Most assuredly no! There is only one instance in the New Testament where the cross is referred to as a burden to be borne and not a thing to be crucified upon, and that is the case of Simon of Cyrene. In this case alone, when you bear the cross for somebody else, may you consider it a burden

rather than an instrument of death. Those to whom Christ spoke would have no doubt of His meaning. He had just been explaining that He Himself must 'go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.' It was the first hint the disciples had had that their mission was to end in earthly failure and disaster. Peter had earned a tremendous rebuke by objecting, 'Lord, this shall never be unto Thee.' Christ goes on at once not only to emphasize that it shall, but to picture His followers as a long line, each with a cross on his back, each on the way to execution. This fearful picture must have caused a deep impression on the crowd. Perhaps for the moment they took it literally.[1] No adult there present could have forgotten the awful days, some thirty years before, when on the death of Herod the Great the country had seethed with revolt, which had been repressed with

[1] Crosses and Crucifixion were such customary sights that Artemidorus assures us that it was common for a man to dream of his own crucifixion, and in his dream to see himself with his cross upon his back. See *The Church's Task under the Roman Empire*, Bigg, p. 79 *n.*

frightful cruelty by Varus, the Roman commander. Many of them may have seen the long chain of 2,000 people, each bearing his cross on his back, on the way to death. They may well have thought that Christ was predicting a similar end to His followers. So He was, but in a higher sense, in the sense in which Paul interpreted Him when he said, 'I protest I die daily'; and again, 'I am crucified with Christ'; and again, making his meaning a little clearer, 'Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world'; and yet once more, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.' Christ's followers must take up the cross, the instrument of death; they must follow Christ to Calvary, and there they must themselves nail their older selves to the cross which they have carried thither.

Thus the second and third portions of the text carry on and intensify the thought of the first. Self is to be renounced, repudiated, mercilessly crucified. Only thus does one become a follower of Christ. And Paul, in

Galatians, carries the thought one step farther: 'I am crucified with Christ; yet I live.' Only thus does one attain the life indeed.

The repudiation, the crucifixion of self—what does it mean? Something very closely approaching the problem had been discussed four centuries before, while the sun was setting on the Athenian hills, and a little group of men, Crito and Cebes and Echecrates and the rest, stood round their master in the prison to watch him die. Socrates is explaining why he does not fear death. It is not merely the noble conviction which has sustained him in his trial, that 'no evil thing can happen to a good man either in this life or after death.' There is more than this. He tells his friends that a philosopher 'all through life desires only death,' for in death he is sure that he will find an escape for the soul from the fetters of sense which have cramped its flight.

> Body may slumber,
> Body shall cumber
> Soul's flight no more.

But he may not antedate his release. As he

grandly says (*Phædo* 62), 'We men are on some sort of garrison duty, and it is not right for a man to release himself from this, nor to run away.' Dryden puts the same thought nobly:

> But we like sentries are obliged to stand
> In starless nights, and wait the appointed hour.

Meanwhile, until the outposts are changed, it is a man's duty, says Socrates, 'to have no communion or intercourse with the body beyond what is absolutely necessary . . . to live pure from it unti God Himself releases us.' It is Paul's thought, in almost Paul's words: 'I buffet my body, I beat it black and blue, and bring it into bondage.' It is a grand thought, and, even as Plato puts it, comes near to the Christian ideal. But Christ's thought is grander. The body is not the evil thing that Plato thought it. It is a prison, granted; but a prison may also be a training-ground. 'Self is the only prison that ever can bind the soul.' Let us substitute for the word 'body' the word 'self,' and read the words of Socrates again: 'It is a man's duty

to have no communion or intercourse with self.' But that is what Christ says: 'If any man would come after Me, he must renounce and denounce self.' 'It is a man's hope,' says Socrates, 'that when the body is dead the soul shall have unencumbered flight.' 'You need not wait,' says Paul, 'till death releases you for this. It is a man's privilege to attain this result now by crucifying self.' 'He must take up his cross,' says Christ, 'and march on to the execution of self.' If all that he hopes is true, says Socrates, he is 'willing to die many times' (*Apol.* 41). Paul dies daily, and not guesses, not hopes, but knows Him in whom he has believed: 'I am crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.'

Repudiation of self, crucifixion of self—what in plain English, I ask again, does it mean? There is a real danger, I think, that a preacher should lose himself in windy generalities and high-sounding phrases. I had an illustration of this once, when a boy brought me two lines out of a hymn we had been

singing and asked me what they meant. I am sorry to say that I did not know, and I do not with any certainty know now; but I had sung them as fervently as if I did. Do not let this great phrase of self-crucifixion pass through your minds without grasping it. In the first place, and just in passing, denial of self includes self-denial—the greater includes the less; but that is an issue almost trivial in face of the wider issues covered. Self must not merely be not pampered, it must be buffeted (that is Paul's word), disowned (that is Christ's), crucified (that is Christ's also). He who would follow Christ must absolutely resign himself into Christ's hands. He must make his own the noble words of our Covenant Service: 'Impose upon me what conditions Thou pleasest, write down Thine own articles, command me what Thou wilt, put me to anything Thou seest good: I am no longer mine own, but give up myself to Thy will in all things. I put myself wholly into Thy hands; put me to what Thou wilt; rank me with whom Thou wilt; put me to doing;

put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee, or laid aside for Thee; exalted for Thee, or brought low for Thee; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and heartily resign all to Thy pleasure and disposal.' Can you say that? I am not sure that I can. But I am very sure that the man who cannot has not yet taken up his cross, in Christ's sense, if I interpret His words aright.

The point of separation between self-denial and denial of self is the point at which, I imagine, the majority of those who are seeking to know Christ find their first and only real difficulty. They are prepared for self-denial; they are not yet ready for denial of self. They will give up some things. They will not cheat, or lie, or steal; all these things have they avoided, indeed, from their youth upward. Oh, yes, you will give up anything gladly which you never really wanted to retain; but the fact is you are not yet prepared for an absolutely complete and unconditional surrender to Christ of the dominions of self. There is

always some tiny corner of these dominions where you insist on maintaining independence, some little mountain fastness of your souls, like that toy republic of Andorra in the Pyrenees, where self is lord. You say you have no such fortress in your soul. Are you sure? May I ask a question or two? Are you prepared, for instance, in all points to submit your judgement to Christ's? I was talking with a boy once on a small point. 'Yes,' he said, 'I suppose that's what I ought to do, but——'; and I do not know, but I fancy that he went and did not do it. 'That's what I ought to do, but——'; 'I will follow Thee, but——' Ah! these 'buts,' the boundary-posts of the unsubdued territories in our souls. those fastnesses which the power of Christ has not yet reached, where self maintains its independence and has not yet bowed its neck to the King!

Can you wonder that with these reserves you do not yet find a perfect peace? Can the peace of God stand sentinel over your souls to protect them when there is treachery in the rear?

But not merely must every territory in your soul be yielded up to Christ, and treacherous self led out for execution. There is something more. You will remember how during the Franco-Prussian War, and to some extent in the early days of the present War, one of the greatest difficulties of the Prussian army lay, not in the fortresses which one after another they subdued, not in the regular troops which time after time they defeated in battle, but in the *francs-tireurs*, the free-shooters. These were not usually trained soldiers at all, but civilians, farm labourers who kept a musket hidden behind a heap of hay, or maybe soldiers too old or too crippled for the regular army. They would steal out in twos and threes under cover of the night to a dark corner of a wood through which the Prussian armies were advancing, there would come a sudden spurt of fire from behind the rocks, and there were a few more desolate homes in Germany. Long before the Prussians could answer, the free-shooters had crept away as silently as they came and hidden

themselves. Even so, when the territory of the soul is being conquered for the King, every fortified city within it may have yielded, and yet there are left the *francs-tireurs* of the soul to deal with, the thoughts that lurk in ambush behind the rocks in the darkness and fire upon the unsuspecting soldiers of the King. There must be no half-measures. When a *franc-tireur* was captured he was led out and shot within five minutes. There must be no mercy shown to the *francs-tireurs* of the soul, 'bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.'

It might seem as if my argument led irresistibly to asceticism, despite the fact that I began by disclaiming it. The burden of my song might appear to be expressed in those memorable words which Goethe puts into the mouth of Faust:

> Thou shalt abstain, renounce, refrain!
> Such is the everlasting song
> That in the ears of all men rings,—
> That unrelieved, our whole life long,
> Each hour in passing hoarsely sings.

It is not so, but I have scarcely time to do more

than hint at the method of escape from such a position. I will remind you, however, that the same poet who wrote:

> Body shall cumber
> Soul's flight no more!

wrote also:

> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry, 'All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul.

I believe this from the bottom of my heart. The body must be mastered; but it must be mastered in part, at all events, that it may become the servant of the soul, that it may bring for the soul's feasting all the glories of the world around, the lesser pleasures of life as well as the splendours of a sunset or of an Alpine prospect.

But the body must be absolutely cowed and mastered first; and when I ask by what means this may be done, I am bound to remind you again that denial of self, the greater thing, includes self-denial, the less; and I tell you frankly that I think the Church, and especially our branch of it, has swung too

far on the other side in its renunciation of asceticism. I think that if I had to order my life again I would establish a measure of self-denial routine—of fasting, for instance, and of abstinence for a season from pleasure. I think that the instinct of our fathers in this matter was a true one.

Anyway, and by whatever method we work, our constant prayer must be:

> God harden me against myself,
> This coward with pathetic voice
> Who craves for ease and rest and joys.

When self is crucified, life begins, not ends. 'This day,' says our Companion on the cross, 'this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' 'I am crucified with Christ; yet I live.' 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Eden of God.'

> If thou couldst empty all thyself of self,
> Like to a shell dishabited,
> Then might He find thee on the ocean shelf
> And say, 'This is not dead,'
> And fill thee with HIMSELF instead.

Shall we not, therefore, with all joy take our place in the long line of the cross-bearers who follow Christ to Calvary?

XIV

SUNDAY

He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.—Rom. xiv. 6 (A.V.).

You will notice that the words which I have chosen for the text are not to be found in your Revised Version, though they occur in the Authorized Version. The fact is that they do not occur in the oldest Greek MSS., which were written at the close of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth centuries, and it is in a sixth-century MS. that we find them first in the Greek. Nevertheless, I believe that Paul wrote them, for they appear in the Syriac Version, which was made two hundred years before our oldest Greek MS. was written, and it is easy to suggest a reason to account for their being dropped accidentally

in the copying ; and, in any case, the words are so daring that it is difficult to imagine any copyist inserting them, though not difficult to see why, at some time when a wave of Sabbatarianism was passing over the Church, a copyist may have dropped them purposely, unable to believe that Paul ever said so bold a thing.

For what Paul does say, in fact, is this, that the obligation of keeping any sacred day, whether the Sabbath or the Sunday, in any particular way is, in itself, a thing of the past ; that there is a way of keeping it if you have God in your mind while you do it—'He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord' ; but that there is also a way of refusing in any special way to keep it at all, and that this may equally be done 'unto the Lord.'

This, then, is the point I want to consider —the keeping of Sunday ; and if I have chosen a text which seems to suggest rather the not-keeping of Sunday than its observance, it is in order that I may make absolutely plain to

you at the outset that I have no sympathy whatever with those who tell you that all the obligations of the old Jewish Sabbath have passed over to the Christian Sunday, which should therefore be a day of gloom and restrictions, as it still is in the North of Scotland. At the time of Christ the Jewish Sabbath had elements about it which must have done harm to the moral sense. Two whole volumes of the Jewish commentaries are devoted to a pettifogging discussion as to what may or may not be done on the Sabbath. There are thirty-nine principal classes of forbidden actions, and, for the most part, ingenious methods of evading the prohibitions. It would be easy to interest you for hours by telling of these things. Thus at first it was against the law to tie or untie a knot; then it was decided that a man might lawfully untie a knot if he could do it with one hand. The Book of Exodus had forbidden a man to leave his house on the Sabbath: 'Abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day' (Exod. xvi. 29).

Strictly, this forbade a friend to visit another. The difficulty was met in two ways. Either a rope was tied at the entrance of the street, and then the whole street became one 'place,' private property in which visiting might freely take place; or the families in all streets opening on to a particular court would on the evening before the Sabbath deposit food in this court, which thereupon became a part of their house, because the food was there, so that they could go thither without breaking the law 'Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' Later a 'Sabbath-day's journey' comes into existence, and by twisting a particular verse in Joshua, which has nothing to do with the matter, the Rabbis are able to allow a walk of 2,000 cubits, i.e. about three-quarters of a mile; but if you wanted to go farther the matter was simple: you went on the evening before to the limit of your 2,000 cubits and left food there for two meals. This turned the spot into your legal home, so that when on the Sabbath you reached it again you could proceed another 2,000 cubits beyond it.

You might not apply a medicine unless life was endangered; but if you had the toothache you might wash your mouth with vinegar, provided that you swallowed the vinegar, and thus made it into food. And so on—one might talk for hours; and the important thing about all this rubbish is this, that these things belonged to the Sabbath of the world into which Christ came, the Sabbath of the world which Paul knew. We can understand now something of the feelings which lay behind the wonderful outburst in Isaiah: 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity *and* the solemn meeting.' Or, again, 'Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.' Or, once more, that passionate outburst in Amos v. 21, 'I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.'

When we ask what was the attitude of our Lord towards the Sabbath, the answer is

perfectly clear. He attended the Synagogue services on the Sabbath Day, and in every other particular refused altogether to follow Jewish custom. He explicitly declares that *for Him* not merely works of mercy but work of any kind is allowable; that just as God unceasingly, day and night, all the week through, and all the year round, continues the work of His unfailing providence, so He too can carry on His work continuously: 'My Father worketh even until now (i.e. without any intermission), and I work.' Nay, more, there is one saying of His, almost certainly His own, though but one MS. of the New Testament contains it, the great Codex which Beza presented to the University of Cambridge, in which He appears to say that, despite all the prohibitions of the laws of Moses, any one of His followers may work also. For after verse 4 of the sixth chapter of Luke, in which is narrated the incident of the disciples plucking corn on the Sabbath Day, and rubbing it in their hands, thus breaking two at once of the Jewish laws, this

MS. of Beza's, which in the great library of Cambridge is opened at the place, continues with the striking words, 'And on the same day He saw a certain man working on the Sabbath, and said to him, "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the law."' If you ask yourself what this extraordinary tale means, there can be little doubt about the answer. 'If thou knowest what thou doest'—knowest that old things are passed away, and that the Messiah has made all things new; knowest that the tyrannous punctiliousness of the Mosaic law has given place to the higher freedom which belongs to the bond-servants of Christ Jesus—'if thou knowest all this, thou art blessed; if not, thou art simply a law-breaker, and cursed as such.'

With Christ's immediate followers also, as with Him, there can be no doubt that old things passed away as regards the Sabbath. The break was not sudden. As the new idea gained in strength the old weakened. It was

a few weeks after the resurrection, probably, when the great idea arose of sanctifying by a service that day on which the Lord for ever conquered death and opened the gates of the New Life, that day which He had twice sanctified by special appearances of Himself, the day which we call Sunday, the day which followed the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday.

It is not, it is true, until near the close of the Book of Acts (xx. 7) that we have a definite statement that on this day the Church was accustomed to meet together for the Lord's Supper and for prayer; but there can be no reasonable doubt that these gatherings had existed from the first, and that along with their growth the custom of Sabbath observance had been slowly dying. It may well have been that the accusation against Stephen of 'changing the customs which Moses delivered unto us' meant an accusation of Sabbath-breaking; and it is impossible to believe that social customs permitted a community to set aside two days of the week, the Sabbath and the Sunday, for religious observance.

Gradually the Sabbath would fall into neglect. The primary reference of Paul in the text I have chosen was, no doubt, to the Sabbath, showing that at the date when it was written (A.D. 56) there were some who conscientiously refused to keep it; and before the end of the first century the Lord's Day had, no doubt, in most places definitely superseded it.[1] But were the obligations of the old transferred to the new? That's the point. Was the Christian Sunday simply the Jewish Sabbath in a new dress? Were all the details of the Fourth Commandment transferred to the Sunday? The question can be answered very definitely. The idea that the Christian Sunday was a mere substitute for the Jewish Sabbath did not arise until five centuries after Christ. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who is anxious to find all the parallels he can between the old and the new, never once mentions this parallel, though it would have amazingly strengthened his argument.

[1] But my brother, in his researches about the monasteries, has found at least one instance as late as the Fifth Century where the Sabbath—Saturday, was the holy day and the Sunday a day of rejoicing.

This, then, is the position as regards Sunday. It is a new day, with new observances, and *not* governed by the laws of the old. There is no law whatever in the New Testament about the keeping of Sunday except the one principle, perhaps, of 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.' That is obligatory; the rest is not.

'Does this mean in plain English,' you say, and naturally enough, 'does this mean that I may do what I like on Sunday provided I go to chapel? That I may read what I like and play when I like?' Now before I answer this question I want to make one thing perfectly clear to you. There are many good Christian people who would not agree with my answer, and some of your fathers may be among the number. Your duty while you are boys at Kingswood is perfectly clear. You must certainly do on Sunday absolutely nothing to which your fathers would object. The Fifth Commandment holds whatever the fate of the fourth. I desire to say to you with all solemnity that for you to do that at

Kingswood which is displeasing to your earthly father cannot possibly be pleasing to your heavenly Father. But this said, I wish to lay down some principles which may be of service to you when you come to work out, as sooner or later you must, your code of moral practice for yourselves. May I do what I like on Sunday? Yes, you *may*, but, nevertheless, you *must not*. All things are lawful to you, but all things are not expedient. You may, but you must not. You *may* read newspapers or play cricket on Sundays, but you *must not*. Do not remember the first half of that sentence and forget the second. Everybody likes to remember the 'mays' of life and forget the 'must nots.' But the true Christian liberty consists in remembering first the 'must nots' before rejoicing in the 'mays.' I will tell you before I finish exactly why you 'must not.' Meanwhile, may I digress for a moment?

It is Christ's policy, if I may use the word, in the training of His children not to tell them too narrowly what they are to do, but rather to provide them with broad general

principles which shall guide their conduct, not in one detail of life's problems, but in all. In mountain climbing it will sometimes happen when a very dangerous place has to be passed —say, a steep slope of ice on which every little splinter that is dislodged goes hissing down for thousands of feet—that the guide will pause, cut two or three steps, then stoop and place your feet in the first of the steps he has made, showing you exactly where and how to stand, then cut a few steps more and pause again, until you are past the danger. But mountain climbers are not to be made that way. It is safe, no doubt; but after one ice-slope is passed this novice is no better able to tackle the next. To make a climber he must be left to himself; he may and must watch how the guide places his own feet, but after that he must traverse the awkward place alone with no more help than the rope affords with which he is always linked to his guide. It is so with the climbs of our moral life. Christ, our Guide, has left us with the general guidance of His example, with broad principles sufficient to enable us

to climb safely, and He is willing always to be on the same rope with us.

Keeping these things in view, let us see what conclusions we may lay down in regard to the keeping of Sunday.

First, Christ could afford to make but little distinction between the Sabbath and ordinary days, because for Him every day was a Sabbath: He was always about His Father's business. A scrap of papyrus was dug up some ten years ago from a rubbish-heap of an early Christian city in Egypt, and on it were discovered some words of Christ's which were not in the Gospels. Among them were words of which the translation may, perhaps, be this: 'Except ye make the week a Sabbath, ye shall not see the Father'; or, to quote this wonderful saying in full, 'Except ye fast to the world, ye shall in no wise find the kingdom of God; and except ye make a Sabbath of the week, ye shall not see the Father.' Now Christ, I repeat, could afford to make but little distinction between the Sabbath and ordinary days, because for

Him every day was a Sabbath. He made a Sabbath of the week. You can afford to make but little distinction between Sunday and ordinary days *if you make a Sunday of the week.* Do not mistake me. To make a Sunday of the week and to make a week-day of the Sunday are two very different things. I said to you once that I would scorn to do anything on week-days that I would not do on Sunday. I mean it, however imperfectly I may have lived up to my principles. It is not right to do anything on week-days which it is absolutely wrong to do on Sundays. They tell of San Carlo Borromeo, the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, that one day he was playing cards with two priests when somebody started the question, 'What should we do if we now knew we had only a minute to live?' One priest said he would pray, and the other that he would run into the church. 'And I,' said St. Charles, 'would go on with the game.' A somewhat similar tale is told of Mr. Wesley: 'Suppose you knew, Mr. Wesley, that you were to die at twelve o'clock to-morrow

night, how would you spend the intervening time?' 'How, madam? Why, just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this night at Gloucester, and again at five to-morrow morning. After that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory.' The man who so lives that the Great Summons need in nothing disturb his ordinary life may safely, so far as he himself is concerned, make little difference between Sunday and week-day. May I read a newspaper on Sunday? Yes, certainly, if you read it to the glory of God; and unless you can do this, you ought not to read it on week-day. So far as the 'may I's' of the question go, the answer in every case is immediate. You may do on Sunday whatever you can do to the glory of God, and you must not do anything on

week-day which you cannot do to the glory of God.

Secondly, you *may* do anything, but there are many things you *must not* do.

i. You must do nothing which will interfere with the rights of others—rights to a day of rest, I mean.

ii. You must do nothing which will interfere with the conscience of others.

iii. You must do nothing which will interfere with the development of your own soul.

Now each one of these heads deserves a sermon to itself, and there is time only for a word or two. I propose to miss the first question altogether—the question of the interference with the inalienable rights of others to a day of rest. It is a very big question, bristling with practical difficulties—railway travelling, posts on Sundays, the very cooking of your dinner—but it is not a question which looms large in a schoolboy's life. You will have to face it when you go out into the world. Take care you face it with Christ at your side to help you in it, and out of it.

You must do nothing which will *interfere with the conscience of others*. This is of the utmost importance in our common school life. There are few places where example, good or bad, has a greater influence than it has here. No day passes but one of Christ's little ones is made to stumble. I ask you always—not here only, but in the larger world outside—to apply this test to your conduct on Sunday, as on other days: Am I doing that which may cause one of Christ's little ones to stumble? May I do this? May I do that? You may, but you must not, lest one of Christ's little ones stumble.

Let me take an instance. May I read the *Strand Magazine* or the *Windsor* on Sundays? You may, but if you are Christ's man I think that you must not, and will not, while you are here. I do not say you shall not, or that any compulsion of ours shall be used to prevent your doing it. Such compulsion would deprive of any value the obedience to the law of 'Must Not,' the deliberate choice of which is perhaps the most valued part of our moral training.

You ask why you 'must not'? Because there are here many whose sense of the sacredness of the day you would be violating. It may be that to you such reading has not the effect of putting sacred things farther away from you. There can be no question that to some it would seem to be doing this. For them you would be weakening their hold on God. They would be Christ's little ones made to stumble by you. It would be better that a millstone were hung round your neck and you were cast into the depths of the sea.

But let me ask you one plain question. Are you very sure that you yourself are so strong-minded that you can afford to do the things you do here on Sunday? When John Wesley was at college his mother wrote to him: 'Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a pleasure take this rule: Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing to you is sin.' Will you just

apply that canon to your doings of to-day? Have you done nothing to-day against which your conscience *once*, at all events, protested? Has your reading been what your father would have allowed? Has it deepened your love of the pure and the true and the good?

And that brings me to my final sentences. Whatever you do on Sunday, you must do nothing which will *interfere with the development of your own soul.* Dr. Dale, in one of his books says, and rightly, that the questions which perplex some good people as to what ought or ought not to be done on Sunday never ought really to be asked at all. We ought not, he says, to ask, 'Shall I, by doing this, break a law?' but, 'Shall I, by doing this, miss a blessing?' Now for your own soul's sake there are needed seasons when you go apart for awhile, lay aside your ordinary work and occupations—not because they are not sacred, for they either are or ought to be—and give yourself up to the direct culture of the soul's growth. Sunday is the day when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

It is surely fitting that a large part, at least, of our thoughts, our acts, and our reading should fit us for the resurrection which He desires to repeat in us, from our dead past to higher things. Nor does this mean a day which anybody need think dull. In the records of God's heroes of whom the world was not worthy, in the tales of the martyrs, in the lives of the saints, we may surely find as much to fascinate and more to elevate than in the doings of a detective. No novel that was ever written is more interesting than the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and yet most of those who hunger for the *Strand Magazine* on Sundays have never read that. I protest that in my boyhood I was as hungry as any for Red Indians, pirates, and shipwrecks, and yet the absolutely unforgettable memory of those days is that of Sunday evenings, of a big arm-chair with my mother in the middle of it, and her two boys sitting one on either arm of the chair, with our feet resting behind her, inside the chair, while she read the *Pilgrim's Progress* to us. Giant Despair was real enough to us.

We knew every step of the Hill of Difficulty, every nook of the House Beautiful, and from the Delectable Mountains we caught together those fleeting glimpses of the 'shining spires' of the city we were travelling to. Was it dull? It was all gold, pure gold.

May I ask you to think of these things?

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